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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

MAKING ROOM FOR MRS. BROWN:
VIRGINIA WOOLF, WOMEN AND FICTION

BY

MICHELE M. GUNDERSON

(C)

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Making Room for Mrs. Brown: Virginia Woolf, Women and Fiction

submitted by Michèle M. Gunderson
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

In "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Virginia Woolf claims that Arnold Bennett has forgotten about Mrs. Brown. Who is this mysterious person? For Woolf, Mrs. Brown represents a number of things: she is character; she is human nature; she is a little old lady sitting in the corner of a railway carriage. Significantly, Mrs. Brown is also a woman. And Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy and writers before them--as Woolf points out in "Men and Women"--have forgotten about her.

In this thesis, I look at Mrs. Brown in Virginia Woolf's work. How does Woolf construct women in her fiction, and how does she revise this construction in various drafts of novels in particular and through her years of writing fiction in general? Why has Mrs. Brown been neglected according to Woolf? How does she subvert the traditional patriarchal view of Woman in order to make room for real, live women?

The thesis is made up of four chapters. In each of these chapters, although I concentrate on one central work, I also draw from various other works by Virginia Woolf, including draft versions of the three novels studied; from theoretical work by scholars who are not writing about Woolf; and finally, from the work of scholars who have dealt with subjects related to or relevant to Mrs. Brown. After an introductory chapter on "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," I concentrate on three novels by Woolf: The Voyage Out, To the Lighthouse, and finally in the last chapter, The Years. These three novels represent works from the teens, twenties, and thirties--the three major

decades of Woolf's writing career. Each of the novels is quite autobiographical; each involves the death of a mother figure; and each works through some problem involved in making room for Mrs. Brown. Although the study of Mrs. Brown could be extended to include an analysis of Woolf's other works, limits of time and space prohibit such an analysis here. It is hoped that this thesis will inspire further work in this area, thus making a little more room, in turn, for Mrs. Brown.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Novels by Virginia Woolf are cited as follows:

M	Melymbrosia
VO	The Voyage Out
TL MS	To the Lighthouse: The original holograph draft
TL	To the Lighthouse
TP	The Pargiters
TY	The Years

Other works are cited as follows:

B1	"Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," First Version (1923)
B2	"Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Second Version (1924)
RO	A Room of One's Own
TG	Three Guineas
MB	Moments of Being
E	Collected Essays, 4 vols.
L	Letters, 6 vols.
AWD	A Writer's Diary
WW	Women and Writing
CSF	The Complete Shorter Fiction

INTRODUCTION

The Neglect of Mrs. Brown

> At whatever cost of life, limb, and damage to valuable property Mrs Brown must be rescued, expressed, and set in her high relations to the world before the train stopped and she disappeared for ever. And so the smashing and crashing began . . . .[1]
>
> Virginia Woolf

In "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Virginia Woolf claims that Arnold Bennett has forgotten about Mrs. Brown. Who is this mysterious person? For Woolf, Mrs. Brown represents a number of things: she is character; she is human nature; she is a little old lady sitting in the corner of a railway carriage. Significantly, Mrs. Brown is also a woman. And Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy and writers before them--as Woolf points out in "Men and Women"--have forgotten about her.

In much of her own writing, Woolf tries to find this Mrs. Brown. From her earliest stories onward, Virginia Woolf addresses the problem of the missing woman: Who is she? What is she like? The main characters in her earliest four stories are all women. Her first novel is about the engagement, first sexual encounters, and early death of a young motherless woman, Rachel Vinrace. Like Rachel, of

course, Woolf herself lost her mother early; and in Moments of Being, Woolf writes about her pursuit of this other woman, her own mother. Until she was in her forties, she confesses, "the presence of my mother obsessed me." This chase too is connected with Mrs. Brown:

> Mark Gertler dined here and denounced the vulgarity, the inferiority of what he called "literature"; compared with the integrity of painting. "For it always deals with Mr. and Mrs. Brown," he said--with the personal, the trivial, that is . . . . Yet if one could give a sense of my mother's personality one would have to be an artist. It would be as difficult to do that, as it should be done, as to paint a Cézanne. (MB, 99)

By her own admission, To the Lighthouse is Virginia Woolf's attempt to express her vision of this mysterious woman, Virginia's mother Julia Stephen: "I described her and my feeling for her in that book," she writes (MB, 94).

Not only in her fiction but in essays and biographies as well, Woolf is concerned with the spectre of missing women: working women in "Memories of a Working Women's Guild," obscure women in "Women and Fiction" and "Lives of the Obscure," writing women in A Room of One's Own, educated and independent women in Three Guineas and so on. Surprisingly enough, despite Woolf's obvious fascination with this subject and the current scholarly debates about Woolf and feminism, little attention has been paid to Mrs. Brown. Surprisingly, Woolf's interest in the lives of obscure but

very real women or the construction of women in and by fiction is a relatively neglected area of study.

In this thesis, I look at Mrs. Brown in Virginia Woolf's work. How does Woolf construct women in her fiction, and how does she revise this construction in various drafts of novels in particular and through her years of writing fiction in general? Why has Mrs. Brown been neglected according to Woolf? How does she subvert the traditional patriarchal view of Woman in order to make room for real, live women?

The thesis is made up of four chapters. In each of these chapters, although I concentrate on one central work, I also draw from various other works by Virginia Woolf, including draft versions of the three novels studied; from theoretical work by scholars who are not writing about Woolf; and finally, from the work of scholars who have dealt with subjects related to or relevant to Mrs. Brown. After an introductory chapter in which I discuss "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," I concentrate on three novels by Woolf: The Voyage Out, To the Lighthouse, and finally in the last chapter, The Years. These three novels represent works from the teens, twenties, and thirties--the three major decades of Woolf's writing career. Each of the novels is quite autobiographical; each involves the death of a mother figure; and each works through some problem involved in making room for Mrs. Brown. Although the study of Mrs. Brown could

certainly be extended to include an analysis of Woolf's other novels (as well as many of her short stories and essays), limits of time and space prohibit such an analysis here. It is hoped that this thesis will inspire further work in this area, thus making a little more room, in turn, for Mrs. Brown.

The first chapter presents a close reading of two versions of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" in order to explain who Mrs. Brown is and why she has been "missed"; I then go on to look at Mrs. Brown in a number of essays and stories by Virginia Woolf. The second chapter deals with Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out. How does Woolf represent Rachel Vinrace? What are the problems associated with female sexuality and female sexual ignorance? How is Rachel defined from the outside, and what forces are at work to destroy her? Why does she die in the end? In the third chapter, I look at another novel with a lost mother figure, To the Lighthouse. How do Lily and Mrs. Ramsay compare with Woolf's earlier creation, Rachel Vinrace? How does Lily's gaze change the view of Mrs. Ramsay? How does Woolf rewrite the family, mother-and-daughterhood, Freud's Oedipal triangle? Who are Lily and Mrs. Ramsay and what is the nature of their relationship?

Finally, in the fourth chapter, I concentrate on Woolf's last novel published in her lifetime, a novel in which Woolf returns to a lost mother figure as well as to a

more standard narrative form similar to The Voyage Out. In this last chapter, I will deal with women together and Mrs. Brown in society. Earlier, Woolf chastized Bennett for being so caught up in the facts as to miss Mrs. Brown altogether. But in this novel, Virginia Woolf wants both. As she notes in her diary on April 25, 1933, in The Years "I want to give the whole of the present society--nothing less: facts as well as the vision" (AWD, 192). How does Woolf's attempt to give "the whole of present society" change through draft versions of The Years? Where does Mrs. Brown fit in society, and what happens when she enters the professions? How do the "facts" change the "vision"? What does Mrs. Brown have to do with "a new world"? What might her new house look like? What, finally, must be smashed and crashed? These are some of the questions I explore in this thesis.

NOTES: PREFACE

1. Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," 333-34; hereafter cited parenthetically as B2. The first version of this essay (1923) will be cited as B1. Works by Virginia Woolf will be cited by a shortened title name only; see list of abbreviations (vi).

CHAPTER ONE

"Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown": Looking for Mrs. Brown

> Mrs. Brown and I were left alone together. She sat in her corner opposite, very clean, very small, rather queer, and suffering intensely. The impression she made was overwhelming. It came pouring out like a draught, like a smell of burning. What was it composed of--that overwhelming and peculiar impression?
>
> Virginia Woolf (B2, 323)

In an essay entitled "Is the Novel Decaying?", Arnold Bennett attacks the characters of Virginia Woolf. Woolf is so preoccupied with originality and cleverness, he argues, that in the process she has forgotten about character. Her characters simply do not seem real; they "do not vitally survive in the mind." The charge is a serious one, since he further claims that "[t]he foundation of good fiction is character-creating, and nothing else." The "law" of fiction he decrees authoritatively is black and white and hard as granite: "If the characters are real, the novel will have a chance; if they are not, oblivion will be its portion" (87-88). Of course, Arnold Bennett doesn't stop to explain what a "real" character is. He doesn't stop to consider, whose reality? Nevertheless, his law remains, and as far as Bennett is concerned, Virginia Woolf stands convicted: having

produced "unreal" characters, she has effectively consigned her own novels to oblivion.

The "defendant" doesn't ignore the charge or treat it lightly. On the contrary, in her defense--a reply published in December of the same year, 1923--Virginia Woolf declares that "the dispute is fundamental." But she sees the issue quite differently. For Woolf, the question of character is far more problematic than it is for Bennett:

> In real life there is nothing that interests us more than character, that stirs us to the same extremes of love and anger, or that leads to such incessant and laborious speculations about the values, the reasons, and the meaning of existence itself. To disagree about character is to differ in the depths of the being. (B1, 272)

For Woolf, this fundamental question involves much speculation. It is not a question reserved for experts; rather, it's a discussion in which "we," ordinary people, are involved: "everyone in this room is a judge of character," she writes in the revised version I will discuss shortly (B2, 320). Arnold Bennett and Virginia Woolf obviously see the world in radically different ways. So what makes this disagreement so fundamental? What is at the center of this dispute? What, finally, is at stake here?

The answer to all three questions might be, to put it simply, Mrs. Brown. Who is she? There is no simple answer. but in real life--that is, as long as we live in a polite

upper middle class world, as Woolf implicitly admits--we can always decide not to argue.[1] We can "mumble the polite agreements of the drawing-room," defer to the "superior" genius of Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett. Surely they must know who she is. But for Woolf, such polite coddling is "useless." She does not try to gloss over the dispute; on the contrary, she underscores her differences with Bennett and begins to explore the implications. What happens, she asks,

> when we cease to believe what we are told about her, and begin to search out her real meaning for ourselves? In the first place, her solidity disappears; her features crumble; the house in which she has lived so long (and a very substantial house it was) topples to the ground. She becomes a will-o'-the-wisp, a dancing light. . . . The most solemn sights she turns to ridicule; the most ordinary she invests with beauty. . . . And it is from the ruins and splinters of this tumbled mansion that the Georgian writer must somehow reconstruct a habitable dwelling-place; it is from the gleams and flashes of this flying spirit that he [sic] must create solid, living, flesh-and-blood Mrs. Brown. (B1, 272-73)

Re-constructing, re-creating a solid, living, flesh-and-blood Mrs. Brown is not an easy task. But the novelist who finds herself "hopelessly at variance" with authorities like Bennett and Wells and Galsworthy has no choice:

> He [sic] must set about to remake the woman after his own idea. And that, given the circumstances, is a very perilous pursuit. (B1, 272-73)

Woman, thus, has already been "made"; so in order to "remake" her, the old house must be torn down and a new house must be built. The one who undertakes this perilous pursuit is, of course, Virginia Woolf herself. In many of her works--short stories, novels, essays, biographies--Woolf sets out to "remake the woman after her own idea." The project is essentially a feminist one (although Woolf herself would not use this term).[2] And the task, given the circumstances, is difficult--a lifetime pursuit.

Woolf obviously thought that the dispute with Bennett was important enough to merit further work; and in 1924, she decided to lengthen and revise her reply. The first revision was for a reading in May; and in October, after another revision, her famous "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" essay was published. In this later version, the emphasis is placed even more emphatically on Mrs. Brown. The essay begins where the first version ends, with Woolf following the "will-o'-the-wisp," Mrs. Brown, who dances before her and calls seductively, "My name is Brown. Catch me if you can." Thus far, she seems to be more or less in agreement with Arnold Bennett: "men and women write novels," she writes, "because they are lured on to create some character which has thus imposed itself upon them" (B2, 319). For Woolf, character is fundamental.[3]

But Woolf's concentration on this particular character--an ordinary little old woman sitting in the corner

of a train carriage--is significant. It is an old story with a twist, a new construction: Mrs. Brown is seductive, charming, elusive; but she is not, as some might imagine from the description, a kind of playboy centerfold. Her elusiveness is not a sham, not simply another word for easy accessibility; and her seductiveness is of a different kind. She is not even young and beautiful. She is, on the contrary, old and poor. "I felt that she had nobody to support her," Woolf writes; "that, having been deserted, or left a widow, years ago, she had led an anxious, harried life . . . ." Her looks suggest real life problems: suffering, apprehension, extreme poverty, abandonment (B2, 322).[4] Not a seductive and airy fantasy-woman but rather Mrs. Brown the flesh-and-blood woman--elderly, married, with a commonplace name and a history--it is she who attracts Virginia Woolf.

For Woolf to speak of Mrs. Brown in particular is significant in another way: Mr. Bennett, Woolf says, always looks at the general, never the particular. He describes the house (the "very substantial house" that Woolf topples to the ground), tells us "facts about rents and freeholds and copyholds and fines," but forgets the real person inside: "Mr. Bennett has never once looked at Mrs. Brown in her corner," Woolf charges. In fact, "not one of the Edwardian writers has so much as looked at her" (B2, 330). So who exactly is this seductive old woman? And why has she been neglected?

On one level, of course, Mrs. Brown is "human nature." The train is travelling "from one age of literature to the next," Woolf writes, and Mrs. Brown sits there eternally, "changing only on the surface," while the novelists get in and out of the carriage (B2, 330). So it is human nature that the Edwardian writers have ignored. But there is more to the story than that: Mrs. Brown is also a woman. Mrs. Brown the woman has most certainly been neglected. And if the Edwardians (or, for that matter, other previous male writers) will not look at her, Virginia Woolf will.[5] So what has caused this perhaps surprising neglect of Mrs. Brown?

To answer this question, we should return once again to the carriage where Mrs. Brown sits. What kind of power politics occur when Mr. Smith sits beside her? His situation is obviously quite different from hers: Mr. Smith is "no relation of Mrs. Brown's," Woolf writes. "[B]igger, burlier, less refined," wearing better clothes than she, Mr. Smith is evidently the one in control. "Obviously" he has a "secret, perhaps sinister business" to settle with her. Mr. Smith "had some power over her which he was exerting disagreeably," and Mrs. Brown has no choice in the matter: "Obviously against her will she was in Mr. Smith's hands." Mr. Smith does almost all of the talking: money, power and knowledge (he apparently knows all about plagues of insects) are all on his side. Ignoring the particular question that seems to have some personal significance for Mrs. Brown ("Can you tell

me if an oak-tree dies when the leaves have been eaten for two years in succession by caterpillars?"), he talks instead in general and at great length about another man, his brother who keeps a fruit farm in Kent. He speaks in a "bullying, menacing way," and Mrs. Brown is obviously affected:

> While he talked a very odd thing happened. Mrs. Brown took out her little white handkerchief and began to dab her eyes. She was crying. But she went on listening quite composedly to what he was saying, and he went on talking, a little louder, a little angrily, as if he had seen her cry often before; as if it were a painful habit. At last it got on his nerves. (B2, 323)

Although he is ashamed of himself for doing so, he effectively silences her and forces her to comply. He gets what he wants from her in the end (B2, 321-23).

According to Foucault's model of power, power is exercised rather than possessed; power is not primarily repressive, but productive; and power should be analyzed from the bottom up in order to show "how power relations at the micro-level of society make possible certain global effects of domination (e.g., class power, patriarchy)" (Sawicki, 26-29). Foucault's model is both convincing and, I believe, useful; but Woolf was using a similar "model" (she would never call it a model) to examine the nature of and effects of power long before Foucault. Three Guineas, a work in which Woolf links the global tyranny of Fascism with the private tyranny in the patriarchal home, is perhaps the most

obvious example; but when this work was written, the connection was dismissed in many quarters as either absurd or irrelevant (Lee, xv-xvi). I will return to this work and its companion, The Years, in the last chapter.

But The Years and Three Guineas are not the only works in which Woolf examines power this way. The power relations in Mrs. Brown's railway carriage fit this paradigm quite well. To begin with, Woolf does not talk about men and women in general, but rather Mrs. Brown and Mr. Smith in particular. She invents a local situation and looks at power relations on an everyday level in order to explain, ultimately, a more general phenomenon: why are women missing in literature as writers, readers, and characters? Secondly, Mr. Smith does possess power, but the important thing is not so much his possession of power but the way in which he is "exerting" it "disagreeably." Thirdly, as Foucault notes, one of the effects of power is the production of discourses of truth which, in turn, reproduce this power. For Foucault, truth and power are inseparable: "we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (Power/Knowledge, 93). Ultimately, the kind of power Mr. Smith is exerting is productive: as I will discuss presently, it produces a false picture of Mrs. Brown.

Let us return, however, to Mrs. Brown and Mr. Smith in the railway carriage. A few pages later, Mr. Smith is gone. Instead, Woolf has us imagine "a little party in the railway

carriage": Bennett, Wells, Galsworthy, and Mrs. Brown (B2, 327). What happens when Mrs. Brown is left in the hands of these powerful figures? The parallel with Mr. Smith is obvious. The same power relations are at work in the carriage, only this time Mrs. Brown must deal with men who are even more powerful than Mr. Smith, men whose names are well known. And she is outnumbered three to one. As earlier, she sits in the corner, silent and powerless. If she were to burst into tears the three authors would be just as perplexed and vexed at her annoying habit as the ever-talkative, ever-assertive Mr. Smith was: preoccupied with the carriage or the countryside or Mrs. Brown's clothing, their own words or their own theories; busy confirming their own preconceived notions about Woman without bothering to look at or listen to Mrs. Brown herself; the three could not possibly imagine what could be wrong with the odd old woman. And yet, "[t]here was Mrs. Brown protesting that she was different, quite different, from what people made out" (B2, 330).

At this point, Woolf once again opens up the debate to include the non-experts. She chastises readers and calls on them "as fellow travellers with Mrs. Brown" to help change this false picture of Mrs. Brown that novelists have created. Every day, she says, we have "far stranger and more interesting experiences" than those described by novelists. We know Mrs. Brown in real life, and we know that she is terribly complex. "Nevertheless," she writes, "you allow the

writers to palm off upon you a version of all this, an image of Mrs. Brown, which has no likeness to that surprising apparition whatsoever." Powerful men like Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy have used their position to create and maintain a false picture of Mrs. Brown, and it is up to the silent, common people to try to change the situation. Using a sexual metaphor, Woolf calls for a change in power relations: readers must be less modest, writers must divest themselves of their "professional airs and graces," and books should be "the healthy offspring of a close and equal alliance" between them. Only then will we see a flesh and blood, "blood and bone" Mrs. Brown (B2, 336). Until now, unequal power relations in the carriage have kept Mrs. Brown from telling her story.

Undoubtedly, some would object to this gender- and power-conscious reading. Woolf's choice of Mrs. Brown's gender, they would claim, is simply arbitrary. Woolf writes about androgyny.[6] Is it not appropriate, then, that the figure who rises before her is "the figure of a man, or of a woman"? Did Woolf not simply turn "Brown" into "Mrs. Brown" for the sake of a more concrete illustration? After all, they would argue, Mrs. Brown could just as easily have been Mr. Brown. To a certain extent, of course, this is true. Woolf creates male characters as well. As Virginia Blain points out, Woolf does write novels that explore the male psyche, most notably Jacob's Room and Night and Day--but

these novels, she notes, have been interpreted by feminist critics as comedies (131). And whether or not we agree with these feminist readings, Virginia Blain's statement that Jacob's Room is "Woolf's most comprehensive attempt to give a hearing to the masculine point of view" (130) certainly says something about the rest of Woolf's works: Virginia Woolf is especially interested in women and in the representation of women in fiction. In any case, the situation in the railway carriage is gender-specific: would Mrs. Smith have had such power over Mr. Brown? Brown is not Mrs. Brown by chance.

Woolf's choice of Mrs. Brown **the woman** as representative of human nature is significant. It is no wonder that "the figure of a man, or of a woman" who lures her to write turns out to be a woman: as she says to Dame Ethel Smyth, "women alone stir my imagination" (Marcus, "Liberty," 80). And as Blain points out, although Woolf speaks of androgyny, she seems to be ambivalent about it.[7] According to Blain,

> Woolf writes from a perspective which is unashamed to be female, and which has as its ultimate goal the ability to take its own femaleness so much for granted that the issue of gender can be forgotten. . . (117)

In recent years, the critical debate about Woolf and feminism seems to have become increasingly intense. Blanchard puts it in military terms: "disagreements about Woolf are often

perceived as the battle of North American feminists among themselves and against the world" (95). In a 1983 collection, Joanne Trautmann notes that Woolf scholarship is currently divided into British Establishment and anti-Establishment/feminist "camps" (3), and she "calls for an end to the 'permanently isolationist reductionism' of much current Woolf criticism" (qtd. in Blanchard, 95). Perhaps Jane Marcus puts it most colorfully when she observes, "standing on the literary barricades shouting across the Atlantic is beginning to get boring" ("Quentin's Bogey," 492) . . .

Yet in all the critical furor, as the smoke from the critical "battle" rises, it appears that, once again, Mrs. Brown has been somewhat neglected. Perhaps, as Ursula LeGuin suggests, it is not "critically fashionable" to talk about character. But why should we not take Woolf at her word when she says, "I believe that all novels begin with an old lady in the corner opposite"? (qtd. in LeGuin, 92). Woolf's gender-consciousness as a writer certainly affects her writing style, as Blain points out. But it also affects Mrs. Brown, Woolf's construction of women in her fiction. Who, then, is this Mrs. Brown in Virginia Woolf's writing?

As I mentioned earlier, there is no simple answer. But Mrs. Brown is certainly more lively and various, less easily defined, in many ways more autonomous and capable than Bennett would perhaps like her to be. As Woolf notes, she is

> an old lady of unlimited capacity and infinite variety; capable of appearing in any place; wearing any dress; saying anything and doing heaven knows what. (B2, 336-37)

She is much bigger than Mr. Bennett ever imagined. And it is precisely this capricious and mysterious and fascinating old lady--a flesh-and-blood woman who can, of course, be young, old or middle aged, tall or short, rich or poor, and so on--that Virginia Woolf strives to create, or at least, to catch a glimpse of in her fiction.

Mrs. Brown is a complex creature, and it would be foolish to try to pin her down like a dead butterfly in a museum collection--as Bennett and others have already done. According to Woolf, this elusive, apparently invisible woman--a woman who in her infinite variety is, I suggest, not "woman" at all but rather "women"--has/have never truly been seen with clear eyes anywhere or described by anyone at all. She has never been able to tell her own story, never been allowed to speak. So despite the risks, re-define or re-examine her we must, lest we leave her pinned to the patriarchal table while we defer to Bennett and mumble polite agreements.[8]

In a series of connected papers, then, I look at Woolf's concern for Mrs. Brown/women and her insistence in various ways in various writings--stories, essays, autobiographical writings, and most importantly, her novels--

that the real flesh-and-blood Mrs. Brown has been neglected. I look at Woolf's exposure of the way Mrs. Brown has been killed and erased in and by a patriarchal society. And finally, I look at how Mrs. Brown is glimpsed, resurrected, reconstructed, recreated by Woolf. In many ways, Woolf's Mrs. Brown anticipates a number of contemporary feminist theories about women and the representation of women in fiction.[9] Virginia Woolf is constantly subverting patriarchal views of Woman (Bennett's empty house is a typical example) in order to reconstruct her and make a space for flesh-and-blood women. She tries to give real women room to live and breathe and tell their own stories.

The series of papers presented here also tell their own stories, carrying on an argument by means of textual readings.[10] Although the focus varies from chapter to chapter--I view Mrs. Brown from different angles depending on Woolf's approach in each particular work--the concern with making room for Mrs. Brown remains central. In the following chapters, after an introductory look at some of Woolf's shorter works, the focus shifts from one woman (Mrs. Brown "herself") in The Voyage Out, to a female relationship (Mrs. Brown and her mother) in To the Lighthouse, to women and society (Mrs. Brown's new house) in The Years. In this series of papers I try, in turn, to hear Mrs. Brown tell her own story, to catch a glimpse of her; this elusive and

mysterious, concrete, multiple, contradictory, flesh-and-blood woman.

A shopgirl's story . . .

In A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf notes that Mrs. Brown is absent not only from works of fiction, but also from history books.[11] Mrs. Brown has led an obscure life; and her story remains to be told. As Woolf travels in thought through the streets of London, she gives us a tiny glimpse of this untold story; she feels, she says,

> the pressure of dumbness, the accumulation of unrecorded life, whether from the women at the street corners with their arms akimbo, and the rings embedded in their fat swollen fingers, talking with a gesticulation like the swing of Shakespeare's words; or from the violet-sellers and match-sellers and old crones stationed under doorways; or from drifting girls whose faces, like waves in sun and cloud, signal the coming of men and women and the flickering lights of shop windows. (RO, 85)[12]

In her imagination, she enters a shop and sees a shop girl behind the counter. This simple shop girl (the young Mrs. Brown in my terms, of course) is, for Virginia Woolf, an alluring, enticing, fascinating figure. "I would as soon have her true history," she says, "as the hundred and fiftieth life of Napoleon or seventieth study of Keats and his use of Miltonic inversion" (RO, 86). The great men have had their stories told and retold, and the stories are tired and overworn. But the shop girl is the truly mysterious

figure, the one whose story has been overshadowed and obscured by stories of men. She is the one who has no name we know to call her by, whom we perhaps can call Mrs. Brown. She is silenced. But she rises in front of the writer saying, "Catch me if you can."

A mark on the wall . . .

Although Woolf searches everywhere for information, she finds that "nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century" (RO, 45). (We should remember, of course, that Mrs. Brown was around in the eighteenth century: "Mrs. Brown is eternal, Mrs. Brown is human nature," Mrs. Brown is a woman.) When one tries to picture the Elizabethan woman, she says,

> One is held up by the scarcity of facts. One knows nothing detailed, nothing perfectly true and substantial about her. History scarcely mentions her. (RO, 44)

She is not a writer; she has not left us any anecdotes of her own, "no plays or poems by which we can judge her." She is always in the background (RO, 44-45). She has never been Napoleon, or Shakespeare, or Columbus--all the "great men" have been men. "There is no mark on the wall to measure the precise height of women," she says. "They remain even at this moment almost unclassified" (RO, 81-82).

Using the mark on the wall in such a definitive way, as a precise and final measure, is perhaps part of the problem for Woolf; women cannot/should not be classified this way. When the narrator of "The Mark on the Wall" looks up and sees the mark for the first time, she is led to a fascinating stream of associations: "a lady's picture . . . I'm not sure . . . Oh! dear me, the mystery of life! . . . things lost . . . Tumbling . . . which are trees, and which are men and women . . . whether there are such things . . . buried Troy . . . fragments of pots utterly refusing annihilation . . . I want to sink deeper and deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts . . . ." (CSF, 109-11). This kind of digging is necessary to rediscover Mrs. Brown (see Schulkind, 21ff.).

In this nonlinear stream of thoughts, the narrator begins to question society's understanding of the nature of reality. She considers how we are taught as children to believe that the rules are "the real thing," unquestionable and eternal reality, Reality. "There was a rule for everything." But then how shocking, she writes,

> How shocking, and yet how wonderful it was to discover that these real things, Sunday luncheons, Sunday walks, country houses, and tablecloths were not entirely real, were indeed half phantoms . . . . (CSF, 113)

Similarly, in the adult world (How real are Bennett's "real" characters? Are they half phantoms? Whose reality is he

talking about?) the views of men become the rule, the Reality for both men and women:

> What now takes the place of those things I wonder, those real standard things? Men perhaps, should you be a woman; the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard, which establishes Whitaker's Table of Precedency . . . . (CSF, 114)

Hopefully--to continue Woolf's comparison between adults and children for a moment--men and women will soon grow up. This masculine Reality too has become "since the war half a phantom to many men and women," Woolf writes in 1917, and "soon, one may hope, will be laughed into the dustbin where the phantoms go." This laughter is perhaps for Woolf a unique source of hope in a desperate world torn asunder by the Great War: laughing phantoms into the dustbin could "leave us all with an intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom--if freedom still exists . . ." (CSF, 114).

For the man who appears at the end of the story, however, reality is fixed, and the mark on the wall can only be one thing:

> "All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall."
> Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail. (CSF, 83)

Like Whittaker's Almanack, his perception of reality becomes her (the narrator's) reality, Reality itself: the mark is a snail. Her stream of associations is immediately cut off.

His absolute judgement kills imagination, kills her thought, kills the process that still might, some day, make room for Mrs. Brown.

"What is a woman?" . . .

In "Professions for Women," Woolf describes how she had to kill the Angel in the House in order to become a writer. But once she kills the Angel, she finds she has a new problem: once the Angel is dead, what remains?

> In other words, now that she had rid herself of that falsehood, that young woman had only to be herself. Ah, but what is "herself"? I mean, what is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know. (E, ii, 286)

For Virginia Woolf, then, a woman is as yet unknown to anyone. Woolf may not know what a woman is; nevertheless, she is fairly certain about what she is not. For one thing, she is certainly not what male writers think/claim she is. She is not the Angel in the House. And in her fiction, as well as in her "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" essay, Woolf also points the way toward discovering what a woman might be.

Mrs. Brown yet remains elusive and mysterious. But we certainly learn a lot about this elusive woman from Virginia Woolf. For one thing, her atmosphere is very important. In order to "realize her character," it is important, Woolf says, "to steep oneself in her atmosphere" (B2, 323). So let

us do so. Let us take a look at various glimpses of Mrs. Brown in some of Woolf's fiction. What is it composed of--that peculiar and overwhelming impression?

Stories of Mrs. Brown . . .

From her earliest stories onward, Virginia Woolf addresses the problem of the missing woman: Who is she? What is she like? What does she think about? Or even, how does she think? The earliest short stories in the collection edited by Susan Dick, stories which Dick calls "Woolf's apprentice pieces," date from a very early period for Woolf, 1906-1909 (CSF, 8, 399-401). Yet even in these early stories, Virginia Woolf is concerned with finding or describing or creating the missing woman. In the remaining pages of this chapter, then, I will take a look at the four earliest stories--the beginning of Woolf's search for Mrs. Brown.

As Dick points out, in each of the four stories, Woolf "tries her hand at creating characters." Significantly, in each story, the characters she creates are women:

> In each the narrator focuses on the relationship of the central characters--**all of whom are women**--to their particular society. (CSF, 8, my emphasis).

In A Room of One's Own, Woolf points out that the shopgirl, the woman of the past is silent; her story has not yet been

told. But Woolf's concern with her story begins long before 1928, when A Room of One's Own was published. Woolf's first few stories are already an attempt to imagine the lives of shopgirls, of Mrs. Browns past and present:

> Phyllis and Rosamond, like the elusive Miss V., live in contemporary London, while Joan Martyn's journal takes us back to fifteenth-century Norfolk. "Memoirs of a Novelist" . . . gives us a picture of one woman's life in Victorian England. (CSF, 8-9)

Many of Woolf's later concerns about women and the representation of women in fiction are anticipated in these early stories.

I. A woman's biography . . .

In "Memoirs of a Novelist," Miss Linsett is writing the biography of another woman, Miss Willatt. In this story, Woolf asks particular and concrete questions: What can the biographer tell the world about men and women? Why was the life of Miss Willatt written? Who was she? According to her biographer, Miss Willatt was "an admirable though retiring woman" that "the world had a right to know more of" (CSF, 91). Although the biographer Miss Linsett cloaks her motives under large phrases, "some stronger impulse" makes her wish to write: "it seemed to her that if she did not speak at once something would be lost" (CSF, 92). A number of other thoughts press upon her when she decides to write

Miss Willatt's biography:

> how pleasant mere writing is, how important and unreal people become in print so that it is a credit to have known them; how one's own figure can have justice done to it . . . (CSF, 92)

Certainly the motives of the writer can serve to complicate or falsify the story, especially if the writer's "own figure" gets in the way. In Miss Linsett's case, the narrator notes, "the first feeling"--the stronger impulse not to let something become lost--"was the most genuine" (CSF, 92). Nevertheless, complex human relations and hidden motives have entered the picture. Woolf lets us know from the start that the story of Miss Linsett is not a simple matter.

Certainly, there are many difficulties associated with the art of biography, difficulties that are certainly related to character creation: as soon as people are "in print," Woolf writes, they become "unreal." The story of Miss Willatt and her biographer anticipates Woolf's assertion in 1924 that Mrs. Brown has been missed: "It does not seem, to judge by appearances, that the world has so far made use of its right to know about Miss Willatt," Woolf writes in 1909. "Who was Miss Willatt then? It is likely that her name is scarcely known to the present generation" (CSF, 92-93). Miss Willatt's own writings--she was a novelist--are generally ignored. And despite Miss Linsett's good intentions, the

biography of Miss Willatt, like Bennett's representation of Mrs. Brown, is not entirely successful:

> Happily there are signs that Miss Willatt was not what she seemed. They creep out in the notes, in her letters, and most clearly in her portraits. The sight of that large selfish face, with the capable forehead and the surly but intelligent eyes, discredits all the platitudes on the opposite page; she looks quite capable of having deceived Miss Linsett. (CSF, 99)

The flesh-and-blood Miss Linsett/Mrs. Brown has not really been looked at yet in her conventional biographies.

II. A woman's autobiography . . .

In "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn," Woolf begins to explore the untold story of our foremothers. Joan Martyn's journal is Woolf's fictional version of her foremother's journal, a historical journal that she seeks in vain in A Room of One's Own: "She never writes her own life and scarcely keeps a diary; there are only a handful of her letters in existence" (RO, 44). Since she can't find it, Woolf creates it.

The story opens with Miss Rosamond Merridew, a woman who, like Woolf, is interested in "fragments of yellow parchment" (CSF, 48). Rosamond arrives at the Martyn house, an eminently patriarchal household: "We deal in grandfathers here," says Mr. Martyn (CSF, 56); and later, "we always have sons" (CSF, 60). Yet in this house of fathers and sons, she

manages to find the woman at the beginning, the grandmother, Joan Martyn, who kept a journal in the year 1480. Rosamond is thrilled.

When Mr. Martyn discovers her interest in family histories, however, "his opinion of my intelligence was lowered," Rosamond thinks. She asks to borrow Joan's papers instead of the "Stud book of Willoughby," and he is surprised and disappointed: I don't think you'll find anything out of the way in her," he says; "as far as I can see, [she was] not remarkable" (CSF, 64). Although Mr. Martyn owes a lot to his grandmother--he "learnt a good deal about the land from her, one way and another"--he finds her writing "queer" and "odd" and hard to get used to (CSF, 60). He is not very interested in her story; but Woolf is. The first half of both "Joan Martyn" and "Memoirs" is a kind of search for the woman's story. The second half is an account of the woman's, Joan's and Miss Willatt's, life. In "Joan Martyn," Joan tells her own story; and in "Memoirs," Woolf examines the shortcomings of Miss Willatt's biography in order to discover Miss Willatt in flesh and blood.

Beginning her search for the silent shopgirl's story early in her writing career, then, Woolf not only searches for the silent woman--she re-creates her. Woolf's early stories look forward to her later novels in which she explores the problems and possibilities of Mrs. Brown more thoroughly. As Louise de Salvo points out in her

introduction to Melymbrosia, for instance, "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn" anticipates Rachel Vinrace's story in Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out:

> Joan Martyn's journal records her life's passage through the seasons of one year ending with her impending marriage to a neighboring landowner and her untimely death. Her story is the fifteenth-century counterpart of Rachel Vinrace's story. (M, xviii)

With Joan's story, Woolf begins to explore how myths and stories--tales about Tristan and Isolde, say, or Helen of Troy--"contribute their share to a woman's unquestioning acceptance of her status as a non-person." Like Rachel Vinrace, de Salvo notes, Joan Martyn learns "that love entails death" (M, xxix).[13] Woolf's early stories are certainly not as technically advanced as her later fiction; nevertheless, as early as 1906-1909, Woolf is already exploring the possibility of telling the stories of our mothers and grandmothers for the first time--differently.

III. A story of a shadow . . .

Even the story of the girl who is alive today and living across the street remains to be told. Miss V., it seems, "has been skipped by everyone" in the past. And the only way to "prevent yourself from being skipped" (her story is Woolf's story too, of course) is to write, to make some noise and "assert yourself":

> how could you ever come to life again if the butcher, the postman and the policeman made up their minds to ignore you? It is a terrible fate; I think I will knock over a chair at this moment; now the lodger beneath knows that I am alive at any rate. (CSF, 44-45)

The story of Miss V. is the story of "a shadow," and her story is the same as her sister's: "indeed, one might mention a dozen such sisters in one breath" (CSF, 44-45). The mysterious Miss V. does not seem to be a person; she does not seem to have real substance or body. Rather, she simply glides through some room, exchanges some pleasantries, then "seem[s] to melt into some armchair or chest of drawers" (CSF, 45). When she apparently disappears (not a person but rather "something," some "familiar grey shadow," seems to be missing), the narrator decides to track her down:

> O how mad and odd and amusing it seemed, now that I thought of it!--to track down the shadow, to see where she lived and if she lived, and talk to her as though she were a person like the rest of us! (CSF, 46)[14]

Interestingly enough, in this story the shadow dies--Miss V. ceases to be a shadow--when she is finally named: "I began to wonder if shadows could die, and how one buried them," says the narrator. "[Mary V.] died yesterday morning, at the very hour when I called her name. So I shall never meet her shadow any more" (CSF, 47). In a sense, Woolf is recreating or rediscovering women here by naming a particular woman and rescuing her from the shadows. Mary V. remains very

mysterious, little more than a shadow; we still know very little about her. But we know she is there. She is not, Woolf insists, part of the furniture. She is not, perhaps, what we thought she was.

IV. A story of silence . . .

In "Phyllis and Rosamond," as in the three early stories above, Woolf begins to articulate some of the problems that will concern her in her later writings. Woolf begins this story by noting that "a faithful outline" of people, "drawn with no skill but veracity, may possibly have some value" in this age. As in the other three stories, the people she chooses to represent are women. And in this story, she gives us a reason for doing so:

> [A]s such portraits as we have are almost invariably of the male sex, who strut more prominently across the stage, it seems worth while to take as model one of those many women who cluster in the shade. (CSF, 28)

In this story, Woolf concentrates on upper middle class women. She imagines a group of five daughters "born of well-to-do, respectable, official parents." The group seems "to epitomize the qualities of many" in their position: such upper middle class daughters "must all meet much the same problems, and there can be, unfortunately, but little variety in the answers they make." Two of the daughters, Phyllis and Rosamond, stay at home to practice the art of the drawing

room--the art, in other words, of getting eligible bachelors to fall in love with and marry them (CSF, 28-30). That they are described as daughters rather than sisters is significant: as Woolf points out (CSF, 42), women are traditionally seen in only two roles, as wives and daughters.

In the evening, Phyllis and Rosamond travel to a party in "the distant and unfashionable quarter of London where the Tristrams lived": Bloomsbury. In contrast to the "protected" world of stucco and pillars and drawingrooms, in Bloomsbury "[t]here was room, and freedom" (CSF, 37). At the party, the daughters meet the writer Sylvia. Sylvia is puzzled by the two sisters' lack of freedom. And in Phyllis' conversation with Sylvia, the sisters' imprisonment ("Really Miss Tristram, you must remember that most young ladies are slaves; and you mustn't insult me because you happen to be free") is linked to their dependent role in relation to men as well as to the fact that they lack, quite literally, a room of their own:

> "I can't see why you shouldn't do what you like, as we do," said Sylvia, looking around the room.
>
> "Do you think we could have people like this? Why, we can never ask a friend, except when our parents are away."
>
> "Why not?"
>
> "We haven't a room, for one thing: and then we should never be allowed to do it. We are daughters, until we become married women." (CSF, 42)

The writer Sylvia certainly shares some of Woolf's concerns. When Phyllis tells her most young ladies are slaves, she asks to know "exactly what you mean. I want to know. I like to know about people. After all you know, the human soul is the thing." She recognizes that the sisters' story has yet to be told:

> "I know your evening dresses," said Sylvia; "I see you pass before me in beautiful processions, but I have never yet heard you speak. Are you solid all through?" It struck her that this tone jarred upon Phyllis: so she changed.
>
> "I daresay we are sisters. But why are we so different outside?" (CSF, 41)

Perhaps like Woolf herself at this early stage, Sylvia does not quite know yet how to break through the barrier of silence. At first, Sylvia sees no connection between herself and the sisters. They are like phantoms to her (Are you solid? Can you speak? she asks) and she doesn't know how to get at their story. When she rephrases the question, however, she realizes that the sisters are made of flesh and blood like herself: "I daresay," she says, in a breakthrough which marks, perhaps, the difference between herself (Sylvia/Woolf) and Mr. Bennett--"I daresay we are sisters."

In her own writing, Woolf uses a similar technique. Many of the questions remain the same, but she often rephrases or reworks them in order to get a better glimpse of the elusive Mrs. Brown. In any case, the writer in this

story has revealed the existence, at least, of a barrier of silence. Woolf points out that the true story--the sisters', the writer's, the shopgirl's, Mrs. Brown's story--has not yet been told.

There are other hints of a silent story. Already in "Phyllis and Rosamond," Woolf begins to emphasize female friendship; there are hints of that apocalyptic moment in English literature when, as Woolf imagines it, Mary Carmichael writes, "Chloe liked Olivia" (RO, 79): "The sisters," Woolf writes, "were frankly fond of each other" (CSF, 30). Earlier in the day, before the party, the two sisters have lunch together with Mr. Middleton. The callous female rivalry, the ruthless competition for the eligible man that we often see in male literature is absent here: "by open consent, Mr. Middleton was her sister's game; [Rosamond] did not trespass" (CSF, 32). More than just fair opponents, the sisters cooperate and show concern for one another:

> [Rosamond] knew enough of her sister to know that she would never love this efficient active little man, although she would respect him. The question was, should she marry him? This was the point she had reached when Lord Mayo was assassinated; and while her lips murmured ohs and ahs of horror, her eyes were telegraphing across the table, "I am doubtful." (CSF, 33)

While continuing the conversation with Mr. Middleton on one level, they communicate with each other on another level in a silent language of their own that only they understand; a

language that, we would assume by virtue of the fact that the surface conversation continues without a ruffle, Mr. Middleton must be entirely unaware of. Rosamond, for instance, silently gives her sister advice:

> If she had nodded her sister would have begun to practise those arts by which many proposals had been secured already. Rosamond, however, did not yet know enough to make up her mind. She telegraphed merely "Keep him in play." (CSF, 33)

Phyllis, in turn, listens to her sister and is prepared to act on whatever she advises.

The love affair the sisters plan involves Mr. Middleton. But it is the sisters themselves who understand each other, who communicate silently, who give each other support--who behave more like lovers. "[T]here is even something chivalrous," Woolf writes, using the language of courtly love to describe the sisters' relationship, "in the attitude of the younger toward the elder" (CSF, 32). At the party, Phyllis and Rosamond communicate from across the room (CSF, 38); and at lunch, an entire dialogue takes place between the two sisters, in silence. As I will discuss in the next chapter, in The Voyage Out, Rachel's fiancé Terence wants to write a novel about Silence (VO, 262); meanwhile, a silent story to which he is completely oblivious is being told. Perhaps, like Rachel's silent story, Phyllis and Rosamond's silent dialogue is part of the story that the

writer Sylvia, like the writer Woolf herself, is so anxious to discover.

NOTES: CHAPTER ONE

1.Virginia Woolf is conscious of her class position. Although unafraid to speculate or challenge, make comparisons or ask difficult questions, she is at the same time careful not to speak for others--especially other women--whose situation may differ from her own. In her introduction to a collection of papers by working class women, "Memories of a Working Women's Guild," for instance, she acknowledges that her middle class position is a barrier to understanding the lives of these women. Since she draws from her own middle class experiences, something "was always creeping in from a world that was not their world and making the picture false." Although not insurmountable, Woolf notes, the barrier is nevertheless formidable (E, iv, 137). Woolf's refusal to gloss over differences between women is important. It is a point I will return to in chapter four.

2.According to Naomi Black, "Virginia Woolf **was** a feminist, of course. Her occasional disavowal of the term is both ironic and complex." In Three Guineas, Woolf urged that the word feminist be burned and banished. "But," Black notes,

> the passage continued, to explain that women like Josephine Butler should not be labelled feminists because they were "fighting the tyranny of the patriarchal state" rather than merely seeking women's rights. . . . Such a statement is not a disavowal of feminism but a distinction among its varieties.

As Black sees it, Woolf's variety of feminism "was political because it responded to notions about power and social structure" (312). The role power plays in the representation of Mrs. Brown is something I will discuss shortly.

3.Jean Guiguet takes issue with Winifred Holtby, who claimed in 1932 that "character creation is the all-important quality for Woolf" (43). I would agree that character creation as the Edwardians saw it is not "all-important"--is rather limiting and misleading--for Woolf. But I would disagree with Guiguet's claim that "the lure of character diminishes" for Woolf (44). While it is true that Virginia Woolf does not seek to present characters as such in The Waves (47), to dwell exclusively on this novel to formulate Woolf's theory (as Guiguet admits, 48) is somewhat limiting. Guiguet

astutely points out that the question "**What** are we? **Who** are we?" "haunts and dominates Virginia Woolf's writing." But I don't believe that Woolf finally answers this haunting question simply by the form of The Waves, as Guiguet seems to suggest. There is more to Woolf's characters, and especially her female characters, than simply the assertion that

> man [sic] is essentially a consciousness, that is to say a potential of relations, whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere, and which creates itself at the same time as it creates the universe. (48)

4.As Woolf notes in her essay "Men and Women," despite what the poets tell us, it is "the bent figure with the knobbed hands and the bleared eyes" who is "the true figure of womanhood" (WW, 67).

5.In "Men and Women," Virginia Woolf discusses the representation of women by male writers previous to the Edwardians. I quote this section almost in full since I believe it is central to the problem of Mrs. Brown. According to Woolf, before the nineteenth century, women were for the most part nowhere to be seen not only as writers and readers, but as characters as well:

> Before the nineteenth century literature took almost solely the form of soliloquy, not of dialogue. The garrulous sex, against common repute, is not the female but the male; in all the libraries of the world the man is heard to be talking to himself and for the most part about himself.

The Edwardians were not the first ones to miss Mrs. Brown. Woolf anticipates the work of contemporary feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray when she notes that previous attempts to represent Mrs. Brown have been for the most part reflections of men, not women:

> It is true that women afford ground for much speculation and are frequently represented; but it is becoming daily more evident that Lady Macbeth, Cordelia, Ophelia, Clarissa, Dora, Diana, Helen and the rest are by no means what they pretend to be. Some are plainly men in disguise; others represent what men would like to be, or are conscious of not being; or again they embody that dissatisfaction and despair which afflict most people when they reflect on the sorry condition of the human race.

The practice of looking at men to decide what women are like

does not help us find out who Mrs. Brown is. As Woolf points out,

> To cast out and incorporate in a person of the opposite sex all that we miss in ourselves and desire in the universe and detest in humanity is a deep and universal instinct on the part both of men and of women. But though it affords relief, it does not lead to understanding. . . . [S]ome of the most famous heroines even of nineteenth century fiction represent what men desire in women, but not necessarily what women are in themselves. (WW, 65)

Few writers, then, have looked at "what women are in themselves." In much of her writing, Virginia Woolf sets out to do just that.

6.The notion of androgyny has received a fair amount of critical attention by Woolf scholars. See for instance, Bazin, Heilbrun, Kelley, Marder, and Showalter (as Toril Moi notes, 3, 13-15). Others, such as Moi herself, see the emphasis on androgyny as misleading.

7.De Beauvoir, Blain notes, insists that Woolf is a gender conscious writer:

> A.J.: Virginia Woolf has said that it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex.
> S.B.: Nonetheless, Virginia Woolf thought a lot about her own sex when she wrote. (from Alice Jardin's interview with Simone de Beauvoir, qtd. in Blain, 115)

De Beauvoir goes on to talk about a feminine writing style, and Blain likewise discusses the female narrative voice in Woolf's novels. Neither Blain nor de Beauvoir mentions Mrs. Brown.

8.In a discussion of de Beauvoir's definition of woman as Other, Culpepper notes:

> Already in this way of formulating things, women have been collapsed into the category "woman." This introduces a distortion into attempts to think about women and men, and aids in the construction of an androcratic archetype of Woman. De Beauvoir recognizes this problem of archetyping as a constituent of women's oppression. Nevertheless . . . she does not completely abandon such terminology herself. (8)

The footnote perhaps equally applies to Woolf and Mrs. Brown. Although Woolf uses such categorical terminology--it can often be useful--she too recognizes the dangers and is quick to emphasize that Mrs. Brown is an old lady "of infinite variety." In any discussion of Mrs. Brown, both the problem of distortion and Mrs. Brown's "infinite variety" should be kept in mind.

9.See, for example, Black, 302-304, 308-309.

10.Cf. de Lauretis, Technologies, ix.

11.Of course, Woolf herself does not use the name "Mrs. Brown" in A Room of One's Own. To call the forgotten women who continually lure and inspire the creative mind of Virginia Woolf (including, for example, the fictional Judith Shakespeare), who appear in Woolf's fiction, and who are absent from history books--to call all these women Mrs. Brown is partly my own usage. Woolf herself would not call her own fictional creations "Mrs. Brown," for instance, since Mrs. Brown is so elusive that she is never completely captured. Nevertheless, I think we get a glimpse of her in much of Woolf's writing, including in A Room of One's Own. I believe it is not against the spirit of Woolf's writing to say that she has "Mrs. Brown" in mind here as well--certainly for Woolf, the historical and the fictional absence are connected.

12.In Gyn/Ecology, a book "inspired in a particular way" by Virginia Woolf (although perhaps inspired only secondarily in the way I mention here, the primary inspiration having to do with processions [33]), Mary Daly takes up the notion of erasure of women as well as that of journeying into the "Background" in order to find them (7). Following Woolf, Daly notes that the society of women has been hidden from history books and erased generally by patriarchal culture.

13.The reasons for Rachel's death in The Voyage Out will be explored further in Chapter Two.

14. The description of Miss V. as a "shadow" anticipates Woolf's use of shadows and shades to construct Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse. The subject of shadows will be explored further in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VOYAGE OUT: THE DEATH OF RACHEL VINRACE

> "[S]exuality is to feminism what work is to marxism: that which is most one's own, yet most taken away," that which is personal and at the same time most socially determined, most defining of the self and most exploited or controlled . . .[1]
>
> Catherine MacKinnon

The death of Rachel Vinrace near the end of The Voyage Out has intrigued and perplexed a number of Woolf scholars. Why does Woolf kill her heroine? The answers vary. "There is no reason," E.M. Forster writes in 1915, and an unnamed reviewer agrees: Rachel's death is "illogical."[2] Some critics blame Rachel herself: "Rachel's attitude is wrong and Terence's right," Hafley claims, and Rachel's "wrong" attitude and her death are linked (46-47)[3]. According to Marcus, however, Rachel's death is neither illogical, nor is it her own fault. Marcus puts it bluntly: "Rachel Vinrace experiences male sexuality as rape and dies."[4]

Of course, there is more to the story than the simple equation male sexuality equals rape equals death for Rachel. Nevertheless, Marcus touches on an important point: both male and female sexuality as they are constructed in the society Woolf portrays--turn-of-the-century, British, white, upper-

middle class--are crucial determinants not only of Rachel's story, but of Rachel's self; and the conflicts brought about by this construction help precipitate Rachel's death. According to McDowell, The Voyage Out is a form of Bildungsroman (77).[5] But Woolf's first novel is more than just another story about growing up: in Catherine MacKinnon's terms, it is a story of a girl "becoming a woman," a female subject; and it is Woolf's first serious attempt to construct a new Mrs. Brown.[6]

One important element of this new construction is the reconstruction of sexuality. As MacKinnon notes, the experience of sexuality is at the heart of defining the female self, "becoming a woman." At the same time, she says, female sexuality is highly controlled:

> Socially, femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness to men, which means sexual availability on male terms. . . . Gender socialization is the process through which women come to identify themselves as sexual beings, as beings that exist for men. It is that process through which women internalize (make their own) a male image of their sexuality as their identity as women. It is not just an illusion.[7]

The process of "gender identification" or "becoming a woman" on male terms is precisely what Rachel experiences. It is also what she unconsciously resists. And as Neuman notes, "Rachel's sexual experience and Rachel's death are clearly linked" (63). In Rachel's society, there is no room for

resistance. So for Rachel, the process of becoming a woman--or, more accurately, the male control of this process--leads to death.

Rachel's story begins on board her father's ship, the Euphrosyne, where she has her first sexual experience. Like Rachel, the Euphrosyne is "a virgin unknown of men" (VO, 28), and Rachel is identified with this ship. While a violent storm at sea tosses the steamer--both ship and woman face violence at the same time--Richard Dalloway enters Rachel's room. The ship lurches, Rachel falls, and Richard takes her in his arms and kisses her. "[S]omething wonderful," Rachel thinks, has just happened (VO, 73).

Or has it? Wonderful is apparently defined in male terms. That evening, "wonderful masculine stories" are told at dinner, stories which make people at the dinner-table (the sphere of women) "seem featureless and small." Another male-defined story that Rachel knows nothing about--something between the Dalloways "which is hidden in ordinary life"--makes Rachel feel "uncomfortable" (VO, 74). Obviously upset, Rachel goes to bed early. And because of Richard's kiss (De Salvo, 2), she has a terrifying nightmare: she is trapped in a womb-like vault "alone with a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering." The language is sexual and predatory: "She felt herself pursued . . . . A voice moaned for her; eyes desired her." The ship is

harrassed by barbarian men who come "scuffling down the passages" and "snuffle at her door" (VO, 73-74).[8]

Soon after, the Euphrosyne comes ashore. And like Rachel herself, the ship is symbolically raped (VO, 85). The ship itself, "The Euphrosyne," is female, the goddess of mirth in Milton's Comus (the poem Rachel reads later in the novel). This "goddess of mirth" is connected with a series of images of rape and colonization. At first she is "lonely" and "mysterious" and independent,

> moving by her own power and sustained by her own resources. The sea might give her death or some unexampled joy, and none would know of it. **She was a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin unknown of men**; in her vigour and purity she might be likened to all beautiful things, for as a ship she had a life of her own. (28, my emphasis)

But when she drops her anchor, she bellows her sorrow like a cow as she is symbolically gang-raped:

> small boats came swarming about her. She rang with cries; men jumped on to her; her deck was thumped by feet. The lonely little island was invaded from all quarters at once. . . . (VO, 85-86)

Juxtaposed against this frightening image is another rape story that Mr. Pepper does not mention. The story dies within him, since no one seems interested in the topic.[9] Three hundred years ago, he thinks, the land itself where the Euphrosyne anchors "was still a virgin land behind a veil."

Virgin, that is, until it is raped and colonized by the "hardy Englishmen," who,

> tawny with sea-voyaging, hairy for lack of razors, with muscles like wire, fangs greedy for flesh, and fingers itching for gold, despatched the wounded, drove the dying into the sea,[10] and soon reduced the natives to a state of superstitious wonderment. Here a settlement was made; women were imported; children grew. All seemed to favor the expansion of the British Empire . . . . (VO, 86-87)[11]

It is no wonder that, when the Euphrosyne comes ashore, she goes through a kind of symbolic death: as the chains are drawn over her, "the steady heart of the Euphrosyne slowly ceased to beat" (VO, 34). Perhaps the waves and wide sea offer some freedom; but on shore, the waves cannot protect her. The shore is a dangerous place.

Sexuality, music, and the sea . . .

It is significant that Richard sits upon Bach before he kisses Rachel (VO, 72). Since Rachel grew up "practically in a nunnery" (VO, 162), all her sexual energy is poured into her music. The kind of female sexuality and power her music represents defies convention: practicing the piano spoils the arms with too much muscle, "and then one won't marry" (VO, 16). Instead, at the dance, her music smashes and crashes the circles of conventionality, bringing everyone together in the great "rhythmic swish" of a "swirling pool"

(VO, 151). When she is alone, her music is associated with sexuality and the rolling freedom of the sea: her emotions "blazing . . . and subsiding," she let her mind "enter into communion" and be "delightfully expanded and combined" with the spirit of the music; her mind "kissed the sea, rose, kissed it again, and thus rising and kissing passed finally out of sight" (VO, 33). Thus, when Richard sits on Rachel's music, he symbolically crushes her freedom, her independence, and her ability to define and control her own sexuality; he severs her spiritual and sexual connection with the rolling sea.

Sea monsters . . .

Early in the novel, Mr. Pepper tells a story: there are monsters, he says, lying "at the bottom of the sea, which would explode if you brought them to the surface" (VO, 18-19). The monsters are implicitly associated with sexuality (VO, 277) and with Rachel herself: Rachel imagines herself as something curled up or as a fish "at the bottom of the sea" (VO, 348, 168). So why are monsters and female sexuality submerged?

One answer has to do with Richard's definition of love, a definition later reaffirmed by Terence, as I will discuss later. Just before Richard's kiss, in answer to one of Rachel's innumerable questions, Richard confides that "love"

is one of the "great facts" that stands out in his life. But he has trouble explaining his definition of love to Rachel:

> "It's an odd thing to say to a young lady," he continued. "But have you any idea what--what I mean by that? No; of course not. I don't use the word in a conventional sense. I use it as young men use it. Girls are kept very ignorant, aren't they? Perhaps it's wise--perhaps--You **don't** know?" (VO, 65)

Rachel admits she does not know what Richard means. Immediately, as if to educate her, powerful warships appear on the horizon. They are described as predators, "eyeless beasts seeking their prey." And they are spotted by the woman who shares "something hidden" with Richard, Richard's wife Clarissa. The warships "cast a curious effect of discipline and sadness upon the waters" (VO, 65-66)--for Richard, love involves power, discipline and control. And like the warships, Richard's definition of love keeps the monsters--a threatening kind of female sexuality--from surfacing.[12]

After Pepper tells the story about monsters, Rachel stammers, the words sticking as if to signify the difficulty of the task, "I'm going to t-t-triumph in the wind" (VO, 19). When she stands in the gale with Richard, however, it is Richard who stands firm, proudly meeting the blast, and Rachel who apologizes when they collide (VO, 72). Like Mr. Smith (discussed in the first chapter), Richard is obviously in control. Rachel struggles to define her own identity: "I

can be m-m-myself," she stammers at Helen after Richard's kiss, "in spite of you, in spite of the Dalloways. . . ."[13] But like Mrs. Brown, Rachel is defined from the outside. That Rachel "liked him, and I liked being kissed" only makes the problem more difficult: to be kissed, she must apparently accept the terms of the kiss, the definition of herself the kiss offers. "I hate men!" she exclaims. Rachel begins to despair, to see her life as a creeping, hedged-in thing (VO, 81, 79).

But there are hints of another story. When Helen asks another question--"And did you like Mrs. Dalloway too?"--Rachel suddenly blushes (VO, 79). Before the incident with Richard, a parallel incident occurs with Clarissa--parallel, but with significant differences. Deeply absorbed in a very difficult fugue, Rachel does not hear the knock at the door:

> It was burst impulsively open, and Mrs. Dalloway stood in the room, leaving the door open, so that a strip of white deck and of blue sea appeared through the opening. The shape of the Bach fugue crashed to the ground.

While Richard either separates Rachel from the sea or traps her in it, Clarissa brings the blue sea with her when she enters Rachel's room. A comparison with Melymbrosia suggests that Woolf somehow connected the sea and Clarissa with a questioning of Rachel's identity: in the draft version,

Clarissa opens the door, and a looking glass flashes in Rachel's eyes (M, 42).

Significantly, just before the scene with Clarissa, Richard explains how he once sat on a dormouse and killed it (VO, 52); but unlike Richard, Clarissa does not sit upon a dormouse or upon Bach. She does not want to kill Rachel's music. On the contrary, she is attracted by the music and urges Rachel to continue playing:

> "Don't let me interrupt," Clarissa implored. "I heard you playing, and I couldn't resist. I adore Bach!"

When Rachel stands up awkwardly, claiming that the music is too difficult, Clarissa encourages her once again (VO, 54).

Unlike Richard, Clarissa understands Rachel's music. An older woman who knows society's conventions, Clarissa knows that music is not "altogether good for people--I'm afraid not" (VO, 43). Nevertheless, Clarissa is attracted to music. And Rachel is attracted to Clarissa: indeed, Clarissa's insistence that Rachel should play for her "made Rachel love her" (VO, 44).[14] Clarissa brings Rachel's desires closer to the surface, closer to where Rachel may begin to see or acknowledge them herself:

> She was overcome by an intense desire to tell Mrs. Dalloway things she had never told anyone--things she had not realized herself until this moment.
> "I am lonely," she began. "I want--"
> (VO, 57)

Later, with her fiancé, Rachel wants "something else"; she wants "more." "I don't satisfy you in the way you satisfy me," Terence says. "There's something I can't get hold of in you." She finds what he says perfectly true:

> [S]he wanted many more things than the love of one human being--the sea, the sky. She turned again and looked at the distant blue, which was so smooth and serene where the sky met the sea; she could not possibly want only one human being. (VO, 309)

But with Clarissa, it is a different story. Rachel cannot finish her sentence "I want--" since she does not know what she wants. But Clarissa seems to guess Rachel's secrets: "it seemed Mrs. Dalloway was able to understand without words."[15] Standing arm-in-arm with Clarissa, looking out at the sea, to Rachel "it seemed as if life which had been unnamed before was infinitely wonderful, and too good to be true" (VO, 56-58). For just a moment, Rachel seems completely happy.

Suddenly, Richard interrupts. He has just had an interesting talk with Rachel's father; he draws attention to himself; and his mind is on guns (VO, 58-59). Richard's interruption starts a chain of events: time alone with Rachel, the discussion of love, the warships, the storm, the kiss. And it ends Rachel's close communion with Clarissa.

At present, Woolf writes in her 1931 essay "Professions for Women," a woman cannot tell the truth about her

experiences as a body. When she tries to do so, her imagination is blocked: "Men, her reason told her, would be shocked." No one knows what a woman is, says Woolf, and our ignorance has something to do with a kind of female sexuality that is repressed in and by patriarchal culture (E, ii, 287-88). Woolf is not necessarily positing a pre-existing female sexuality, a female essence that exists outside culture. What she is calling for is a new construction of female sexuality, one that is not governed by a male image. At present, she says, women are impeded by "the extreme conventionality of the other sex," and there are still "many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome" (ibid.). Sixteen years earlier, with the publication of her first novel, Woolf begins to fight the ghosts and set the monsters free. She shows us the conflicts and contradictions in Rachel's sexuality that allow us, first, to see female sexuality as a construction, and secondly, to see the tragic consequences of that "proper" construction.[16]

Of course, as MacKinnon notes, both women and men participate in this construction. Although Richard's unsolicited kiss seems to promise something wonderful, Rachel is soon confused and repulsed by it. When she turns to her Aunt Helen for an explanation, however, the strongly male-identified, properly socialized Helen (e.g. VO, 16, 77) downplays the incident: Rachel "oughtn't to be frightened." That a married man of forty should kiss a young woman he

hardly knows without her consent is "the most natural thing in the world," she says. Rachel should accept such treatment: "you must take things as they are." Indeed, Helen implies, Rachel ought to be flattered by the affair: "I'm rather jealous, I believe, that Mr. Dalloway kissed you and didn't kiss me" (VO, 78). For Helen, as MacKinnon argues, femaleness means sexual availability on male terms.

The death of the mother . . .

Unlike Marcus, Rosenman dismisses the reading that connects "sexual threat" with Rachel's death, claiming rather that Rachel's death actually achieves the reunion of Rachel with her dead mother.[17] The loss of Rachel's mother is certainly significant, as Rachel's turn to Helen as mother surrogate suggests: perhaps if her mother had not died, Rachel would not have been "entirely ignorant as to the relations of men with women" (VO, 77). In order to see this loss as the only reason for Rachel's death, however, Rosenman is forced to postulate that Richard Dalloway is "deceptively offered as a mother-substitute" when he kisses Rachel (28-30)--a reading that seems, to me, somewhat forced. Richard's kiss is hardly maternal.

But another reading is possible. Perhaps the absence of Rachel's mother leaves Rachel vulnerable to the sexual threat of Richard's kiss. "It is no wonder Woolf associated the loss of a mother figure with the terror of a certain kind of

sexuality," De Salvo writes. Following a hint in Woolf's 1897 diary, De Salvo speculates that "Gerald Duckworth started up or continued his amorous advances once [Virginia's half-sister and mother surrogate] Stella was dead, just as George Duckworth had begun his after the death of [Virginia's mother] Julia" ("1897," 98, 101). De Salvo sees Rachel as Woolf's "fictional surrogate," noting that each time Woolf revised Rachel's death scene, she slipped into insanity (First Voyage, 11). Although, as Blain points out, De Salvo makes too close an association between the identities of author and heroine (123), nevertheless, the connection between sexual threat and a missing mother figure is important: without a mother, Rachel must accept the definition of herself that Richard's kiss offers.

The maternal line . . .

The loss of Rachel's mother is important symbolically: the maternal line, Rachel's female heritage, is missing. Rachel's world lacks female presence. Raised by her father and her father's sisters, as a child Rachel turned to old books for knowledge; but paternal censorship left her little chance to learn about her own sexuality (VO, 30, 162). As a young woman, Rachel lacks a maternal voice to instruct, guide and befriend her. If, as Rosenman suggests (30), Rachel dies to join her mother, her death reflects a desire for a female connection, a female image of her sexuality and her self.

Since no female image seems to exist, Rachel must "become a woman" by internalizing a male image of her sexuality; the only alternative seems to be death.

"Making a woman": the father . . .

Although Helen wishes to help Rachel, Rachel's mother surrogate can only act as the enforcer of patriarchal values. Helen, who respects male arguments "much as she respected a solid brick wall" (VO, 312), takes it upon herself to educate/normalize Rachel, "to show her niece, if it were possible, how to live, or as she put it, how to be a reasonable person" (VO, 80). The repeated images of walls, gates and curtains (e.g., VO, 109, 155, 224, 312, 332, 360) are significant: when Rachel voyages out, male power and male images of herself, barriers hard as granite, are all she can find.

When Helen asks Willoughby if she can take Rachel with her to Santa Marina, Rachel's father agrees, provided one thing: Helen, he insists, must "mak[e] a woman of her." Although Willoughby pretends to be inspired by his dead wife, it is his own selfishness that prompts him (VO, 83-84): his daughter must become a woman, and he must oversee the process. Significantly, the path to womanhood seems to require the separation of Rachel from her music: "a little less of that would do no harm," he comments (VO, 83). Since Helen and, behind her, Rachel's father are to lead Rachel on

her path, Rachel's courageous "voyage out" must become the same old path in the end, the path to normative female sexuality and subjectivity. Whether or not Helen realizes it, the "complete course of instruction" she promises to provide is the "proper" construction of Rachel's sexuality (VO, 82-84).

The fiancé . . .

The second part of Rachel's "complete course" involves Terence Hewet, the man who becomes Rachel's fiancé. Like Richard's kiss earlier, Rachel's courtship with Terence is a normalizing experience for Rachel--another step toward "becoming a woman." Once again, Rachel resists, but there is little or no scope for resistance. And although her relationship with Terence is more complex than a single kiss, many of the "lessons" Rachel learns are the same.

As noted earlier, Richard's kiss is associated with warships. Similarly, the first words Rachel and Terence exchange are framed with references to war: while the two are talking, at Hewet's suggestion, "the methods of modern warfare against an invading army" are being used by the others to control ants at the picnic; the next chapter then opens with Evelyn and Mr. Perrott discussing conquered territories (VO, 133-35). Eventually, Rachel learns the lesson. After reading a passage about war in Gibbon--a book given to her by Terence's friend Hirst--she ponders awhile,

"excited by the possibilities of knowledge now opening before her." The knowledge has to do with love. "What is it to be in love?" she asks, as she has asked in various ways before (eg, VO, 144). But this time, there is an implicit answer: love has to do with war. Although the words themselves push toward "an unknown sea," she shuts the sea out and returns home, "much as a soldier prepared for battle" (VO, 175-76).[18]

The circumstances leading to Rachel's possession of Gibbon are significant. At the dance, Hirst's and Rachel's dancing methods are incompatible: Hirst, Terence's friend, has had a formal education (dancing lessons at Cambridge), but unlike Rachel, has no taste for music. This lack of taste for music goes hand-in-hand with an inability to understand women: finding Rachel "very remote and inexplicable," he asks her: "[C]an one really talk to you? Have you got a mind, or are you like the rest of your sex?" He thinks she has led an "absurd" life until now, "walking in a crocodile with her hair down her back" (VO, 152-55).

Later at the dance, Helen asks Hirst to help her complete Rachel's education: "you're just the person I want," she says enthusiastically. When she asks Hirst to explain "the facts of life" to Rachel, Hirst tells Helen he has already tried (VO, 162-63). And so he has: he has given her a male image of herself (the crocodile) and promised to lend her Gibbon (the history of powerful "invaders" attempting "conquest" over "unwarlike natives" [VO, 174]).

Rachel finds Hirst's vision of herself "peculiarly unjust and horrible," and his assumption of masculine superiority "not only galling but terrible--as if a gate had clanged in her face" (VO, 152-55).

Becoming "self-conscious" . . .

The battle is one Rachel cannot win. By turning her back on the sea and entering the battle (VO, 175-76), Rachel has already accepted the war-like terms of Richard and Terence, terms which inevitably make woman the conquered territory. In order to look at Terence, Rachel must literally turn her back on the sea that she associates with freedom (VO, 220). Rachel associates freedom with the ability to observe without being observed oneself--as she was able to do when she peered in the dark window with Helen one night (VO, 219). When she turns to Terence, however, it is her fiancé who gains the freedom to observe; she becomes not the subject but the object of the gaze.[19] Already "under observation"--Terence's observation, of course--she "lost her freedom and became self-conscious" (VO, 216-17). Terence's gaze keeps Rachel under his control.

It is no wonder that Rachel's freedom is lost. Becoming "self-conscious," she actually becomes conscious of a male image of herself, her self reconstructed in male eyes. Terence wishes to write a book on Silence (VO, 220), and he becomes to a certain extent Woolf's mouthpiece for a number

of feminist statements.[20] Mrs. Brown, he says, has been defined by men. She has not yet been able to describe or define herself:

> Of course we're always writing about women--abusing them, or jeering at them, or worshipping them; but it's never come from the women themselves. I believe we still don't know in the least how they live or what they feel, or what they do precisely. (VO, 217)

Mrs. Brown's view, says Terence, has yet to be represented:

> It's a man's view that's represented, you see. . . Doesn't it make your blood boil? If I were a woman I'd blow some one's brains out. (VO, 217)

At the same time, of course, his words are laced with irony. Terence himself never understands Rachel, never understands this silence. On the contrary, his writing helps silence her. "Consider what a bully the ordinary man is," Terence notes at one point; but he does not consider himself an ordinary man. Although he explains to Rachel the power that men have over women generally--

> "I believe we must have the sort of power over you that we're said to have over horses. They see us three times as big as we are or they'd never obey us." (VO, 212)[21]

--he refuses to acknowledge his own specific power over Rachel. "Oh, I'm different," he assures her (VO, 212-13), attributing his supposed powerlessness to the fact that he is

a novelist. In fact, the opposite is true: as a novelist, like Bennett, Terence is powerful. Although the novelist in him questions Rachel about her life, his "determination to know" only "hampered her": she is not allowed to tell her story her own way. And by the time he pries (or tries to pry) her story from her, his controlling gaze has already stolen her freedom (VO, 216-17).

In order to remain desirable in Terence's eyes--to become a woman socially, as MacKinnon notes--Rachel must set aside her own music, her own sexuality. When she asks Terence about his writing and himself, she is "very attractive" to him; but when she begins to talk about herself, her boredom with Gibbon and her fascination with music, she is suddenly "less desirable" (VO, 211-12). Later, although she is "the best musician in South America," Terence forces his fiancée to play "nice simple tunes" that are helpful to his literary composition (VO, 299). The wild and free and rhythmic music she plays at the dance--

> "But that's not a dance," said some one pausing at the piano.
> "It is," she replied, emphatically nodding her head. "Invent the steps."
> (VO, 165)

--is forbidden her in marriage. Like Richard, Terence in effect sits on Rachel's music. Her music must be defined by him, tamed and restrained for his pleasure.[22]

Resisting engagement: "the game's up" . . .

For a newly engaged woman, Rachel is extraordinarily resistant to the idea of marriage. As Neuman notes, Rachel's reaction to the announcement of their engagement is hardly conventional for fiancées. When Helen congratulates her as the two fiancées emerge from the forest, Rachel experiences the gesture as punishment. Rachel then awakens--not to her lover, but to Helen (Neuman,63).[23] Earlier, Clarissa's hand upon Rachel's arm makes the world seem wonderful, and Rachel swears she will never marry; once she is engaged, it is "Helen's soft body" that brings "happiness swelling and breaking in one vast wave" (58, 291). According to Neuman, such factors

> suggest that not only an unwillingness to face the sexual implications of marriage but an unresolved ambiguity about her sexual choice may be the basis of the fact that, in making the socially acceptable female choice--marriage--Rachel has "ventured too far." (63)

The construction of sexuality created and reinforced by the institution of marriage leaves little room for "an unresolved ambiguity about her sexual choice." And for Rachel, as Neuman suggests (62), the price of "venturing too far"--voyaging out to the same old path in the end--is death.

At one point, Rachel and Terence discuss what their marriage will be like. "I never fell in love with you," she

asserts, repeating herself when Terence understandably protests. Recalling the war-like ants at their first meeting, Rachel tells her fiancé, "I thought you and St. John were like those ants" (VO, 300). With words that echo Terence's comparison of the power men have over horses and women, Rachel strongly resists the implications of becoming a married woman:

> "I won't have eleven children," she asserted; "I won't have the eyes of an old woman. She looks at one up and down, up and down, as if one were a horse." (VO, 301)

Rachel learns that a married woman is defined and controlled not only by a male image of her sexuality, but by the product of that sexuality--her children (eg, VO, 325).[24]

In their love-war, Terence is obviously in control. After their discussion of marriage, Rachel and Terence fight a pseudo battle. Terence takes Rachel in his arms as Richard does earlier. And although Terence speaks of a new kind of relationship, the battle tells another story, the same old story told by Richard's warships:

> He caught her in his arms as she passed him, and they fought for mastery, imagining a rock, and the sea heaving beneath them. At last she was thrown to the floor, where she lay gasping, and crying for mercy.
>
> "I'm a mermaid! I can swim," she cried, "so the game's up." Her dress was torn across . . . . (VO, 305)

Rachel has lost the battle, and the sea itself becomes a place of defeat for her: "the game's up." Although Rachel still struggles, still thinks she can swim, her freedom is an illusion. Thrown by Terence to the bottom of the sea, like the monsters, Rachel is trapped and unable to surface.

Myths and stories . . .

According to Marcus, Rachel learns to read, and she "dies from such knowledge as she gains from books, of woman's plight" ("Liberty," 88). One book Terence reads to her discusses upper middle class motherhood, describes "a vision of adorable femininity," and looks forward to the day woman would be "the friend and companion--not the enemy and parasite of man."[25] When Terence finishes reading, the struggle for mastery ensues and Terence throws Rachel to the floor (VO, 303-05). But the book that finally "kills" Rachel is the second book Terence reads aloud, Milton's Comus. This second book gives Rachel another male version of female sexuality: the male spirit calls upon the goddess Sabrina to help him deflower a young virgin.[26]

As Terence reads to Rachel, her head begins to ache (VO, 334). She soon develops a fever; and the emphasis on the intolerable heat (VO, 333, 336) recalls the heat of the forest where she and Terence first became engaged (VO, 276, 280). For Rachel, Milton's words are "laden with meaning," but as she tries to recall them, the meaning is not one she

can relate to or control: "the adjectives persisted in getting into the wrong places" (VO, 333, 336). Her delusions recall the nightmare she had after Richard's kiss (VO, 338). And she is trapped beneath the water again (VO, 348).

One of Rachel's most striking delusions is an image of castration: she sees an old woman either rolling down a hill with a knife (VO, 340) or slicing a man's head off with one (VO, 346). According to Blain, the dream-image represents "an internalization by Rachel of certain male fears about women," that women are castrators of men (123-24). But it is not only men who are castrated; the image also points to the cultural castration of women. The rolling recalls Helen and Rachel rolling on the grass after Rachel's engagement and the subsequent "clap of thunder" that Rachel sees as punishment. The slicing recalls an earlier image of female castration: in the middle of a discussion about love, Rachel discovers that hens are killed in the garden. "They cut their heads off with a knife--disgusting," Evelyn exclaims (VO, 257).

Hens are also killed by a male measure of the way things are, Hirst's chalk circles. In a conversation about women, Hirst claims that all people are types. "You could draw circles round the whole lot of them," he says, "and they'd never stray outside." Terence's murmured reply, written quietly in brackets, is terribly ominous: "You can kill a hen by doing that" (VO, 106). Rachel's music breaks down these suffocating circles (VO, 149, 151); but although

Terence claims not to believe in Hirst's chalk circles (VO, 222), he sits on Rachel's music. He too draws circles that enclose, suffocate, and "castrate" Rachel. He too gives her a male image of her sexuality.

Silverman notes that in the Freudian model of the subject, unconscious and cultural overdetermination play a central role (126, 129); both, I suggest, are important in the cultural construction of Rachel's sexuality. For Freud, the female Oedipus complex begins when the girl "discovers" that she is already "castrated." She turns away from her mother and toward her father to try to make up for this lack (141-43). The properly Oedipalized female subject, Silverman explains, aligns herself with passivity, exhibitionism, and masochism, qualities "which make her the perfect 'match' for the properly Oedipalized male subject" (143). It is these negatively defined qualities that Rachel unconsciously resists.

The path to proper female subjectivity is a difficult one, however, so "it is not surprising that the female subject often fails to conform to the scenario described by Freud." In particular, Silverman notes, the female subject sometimes refuses to turn away from her mother to her father. (Rachel does not turn away from her mother; on the contrary, as Rosenman argues, she dies to join her.) "Many heavily traversed paths diverge from the straight and narrow one leading to Oedipal normalization," Silverman continues,

"including frigidity, lesbianism, hysteria, and paranoia." Given Rachel's attraction to women, Silverman's explanation of these divergent paths is significant: "Because of the intimate links between the Oedipus complex and the larger symbolic order," she claims, "each of these psychic 'disorders' can be read as a point of female resistance to patriarchal culture" (144). Rachel's resistance shows her own "castration" to be culturally manufactured; despite external pressure, Rachel refuses to accept the cultural construction of her sexuality and herself. In Silverman's terms, Rachel refuses to see herself as primordially lacking (192). In the end, however, Rachel's defiance can neither defeat warships nor move an--apparently--solid brick wall. Her music is finally silenced.

It is not surprising that, in her final illness, Rachel's world becomes smaller and smaller--the room, the bed. Finally, completely cut off from the rest of the world, Rachel concentrates on her own body. And "isolated alone with her body" (VO, 337), she cannot remember the old construction.[27] Terence cannot bring them back to their old relationship, cannot make her remember (VO, 339). He wishes her "to join mind to body," but she will not: "She did not wish to remember." She is conscious of her body floating to the top of the room, and she wants to be alone (VO, 354). She must try to understand and somehow resolve the difficult problem associated with her own body. Unfortunately, in this

early novel, the only solution Woolf's heroine finds is death.

Near the end of the novel, the characters discuss the reason for Rachel's death. "There must be a reason," Evelyn sobs. "For it was an accident--it need never have happened" (VO,436). Like some critics, the characters blame Rachel herself: she drank the water, old Mrs. Paley proclaims; she ran risks by behaving as though she were in England, Mr. Flushing judges; she was foolish to go up the river says Arthur, shaking his head (VO, 366-69). Predictably, they blame her death on her will to "voyage out" rather than on the society that traps her in. If it was Rachel's fault, so long as the other characters are not as careless as she, so long as they remain within carefully circumscribed boundaries, they will be safe. The streets, we are told in the opening sentence of the novel, are "very narrow," and "eccentricity must pay the penalty." For her refusal to walk along this narrow, old, overworn path, Rachel pays with her life.

NOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1.Catherine MacKinnon, qtd. in Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't, 184.

2.E. M. Forster, review, Daily News and Leader, 8 April 1915; unsigned review, Times Literary Supplement 1 April 1915 (Majumdar, 54, 50). See also Moore (41).

3.Compare Poresky: "Rachel allows herself to die" (17, 25, 44). For Leaska, Rachel's death is "self-willed" ("Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out"; qtd. in Frye, 422 n.4).

4.Marcus, "Liberty," 77. For other views on Rachel's death see, for instance, Bazin (57); Guiguet (199-200); Kelly (32-33); McDowell (90-91); Rosenman (23, 29-30).

5.Joanne S. Frye calls The Voyage Out a combination of a Bildungsroman and a novel of manners (402-03). Character growth is also emphasized by Blackstone (22; qtd. in Frye, 422 n.3). Leaska, however, sees the novel "not as a Buildungsroman but as a psychological character study" ("Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out"; qtd. in Frye, 422 n.4).

6.See Silverman for an explanation of the term "subject" as opposed to "individual" (126ff). Although terms like "Rachel's self" are used in this chapter, I do not mean a fully knowable, fully conscious Cartesian self. My suggestion is simply that Rachel's "self"--her female subjectivity--is culturally constructed in patriarchal terms; certain gaps or flaws in this construction imply that other constructions are possible.

7.MacKinnon, qtd. in de Lauretis, AD, 166.

8.Both "something wonderful" and "wonderful masculine stories" have been added to the published version of the novel. In Melymbrosia (the draft version of The Voyage Out edited by Louise de Salvo), Richard "kept talk going which did not include the ladies" (M, 59); Pepper states that Rachel ought to learn Greek instead of playing the piano: "Much better for you than those eternal scales" (ibid.). The published version records less of the dinner table conversation, thus telescoping the scene and focussing greater attention on Rachel's dream.

9.Mr. Pepper buries female history elsewhere in the novel, in the form of Persian poetry. He translates the rich and mysterious Persian poetry into strict Greek iambics, a language foreign (hostile?) to women. In his translation, female language is lost (VO, 15, 46).

10.Soon, Rachel herself will be driven to the sea while she is dying. I will discuss her death later in the chapter.

11.In the draft version, Woolf comments on the three hundred year old story:

> Knowing historians, pale men, with endearing eccentricities, which render them incapable of crossing roads, or joining talk, for the mere look of them inspires respect, we no longer hope to find in their works what has really happened. The history of Santa Rosa is a case in point. There is a chapter which will never be written. (M, 70)

12.Richard's power over Rachel is similar to the power Mr. Smith has over Mrs. Brown (described in chapter one). For both Rachel and Mrs. Brown, something is expressed and, at the same time, repressed. In Rachel's case, Rachel's sexuality is contructed in a particular way by Richard; in the process, however, something about her sexuality is missed.

13.Rachel stammers in the published version only (cf. M, 66). As Haule and Smith note, the Rachel of The Voyage Out is "less obviously learned and less sure of herself" than her counterpart in Melymbrosia: "The Rachel of The Voyage Out cannot sort out and verbalize her confusions; in Melymbrosia she is too clear, too practiced" (2-3).

14.At one point, Rachel muses over St. John's idea that love "seems to explain it all." She agrees, but adds her own amendment: "it was not the love of man for woman. . . . It may be love, but it was not the love of man for woman" (VO, 322). De Salvo argues that one of the reasons for Rachel's death is her discovery that she is attached to a man when her natural proclivity is to be attached to women (First Voyage, 146). In the construction of female sexuality as MacKinnon describes it, such an attachment is not allowed: femininity means sexual availability on male terms; and a woman attracted to women is unavailable to men. Having to define herself by adopting a male image of her sexuality leaves Rachel in an impossible position.

15.In the draft version, Rachel's desires are specified. She "determined to tell this stranger . . . that she wanted her mother, and had loved her." Clarissa, who is also

motherless, seems to understand (M, 44). The reference to Rachel's love and need for her absent mother is significant; I will return to the subject of Rachel's mother presently.

16.Virginia Blain uses a similar passage from Woolf's essay to make a related but somewhat different point:

> I should like to suggest that it is this very problem of a woman's disablement by fear of condemnation by the other sex, that is Woolf's subject in her first novel. (125)

17.Rosenman, 28-29; see also De Salvo, First Voyage, 159.

18.A comparison with the draft version shows Woolf revising to strengthen the connection between Gibbon and the view of love as war. In the draft version, the passage involving the attempted "conquest" of "unwarlike natives" by "invaders" and "barbarians" (VO, 174) is not present; when the Rachel of Melymbrosia gets up to leave, she does not look like "a soldier prepared for battle." There are no references to war, and no unanswered questions about what it is to be in love. In the draft version, Rachel simply declares, "I am in love" (M, 132).

19.On the subject of the gaze, see, for instance, de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't, 58-60, Technologies of Gender, 117-18; Doane et. al., 13-15; Kappeler, 63-81 (Problem 6, "Why look at Women"). De Lauretis points out that certain issues related to the gaze were first raised by Laura Mulvey in her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen 16, no 3 (Autumn 1975), 6-18: the centrality of the look, cinema as spectacle and narrative, and psychoanalysis as a critical tool. Doane et. al. note that Foucault has forged a link between power and the gaze. According to Foucault,

> Power works to positively construct and deploy subjective positions and sexualities, not to negate or repress them. And the historical notion of an ever-present Gaze, regulating all images and self-images, is crucial to such an understanding of discursive networks of power. (13)

And Kappeler notes the one-way nature of the look between man and woman: man, the subject, gazes at woman, the object of the look. Like Rachel in The Voyage Out, woman is always observed, always represented.

20.In the draft version, it is Rachel who makes these statements. She tells Terence, "women see the worst of men. How cruel they are at home, how they believe in ranks and ceremonies, how they want praise and management" (M, 151).

When Terence notes that Rachel is not free to walk about London at night because of men like himself, Rachel agrees, describing her house as a kind of black box in which she is trapped:

> "Yes," said Rachel, "think of me at midnight, say in the middle of June; the doors locked and barred; lights out; a kind of throb in the house when one listens. Whether it is the creaking of the boards, or the hot water pipes, I have never been able to make out." (M, 154)

Rachel herself becomes the throb of the house, the heartbeat that can be heard "when one listens." In The Voyage Out, however, Terence notes that no one is listening:

> "I've often walked along the streets where people live all in a row, and one house is exactly like another house, and wondered what on earth the women were doing inside," he said. "Just consider: it's the beginning of the twentieth century, and until a few years ago no woman had ever come out by herself and said things at all . . . ." (VO, 217)

With Terence's comment, Woolf anticipates her criticism of Arnold Bennett in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown": Bennett describes the house, she says, but forgets the woman inside. In The Voyage Out, Woolf "looks inside" the house and "finds" Rachel.

21.A few pages later, Rachel sees Terence at least three times as big as he is: he is "a god," "the centre of light" (VO, 229).

22.Woolf implicitly links Terence's repression of Rachel's music with Richard's sitting on the dormouse/sitting on Bach. In the second passage, Terence compares Rachel's music to "an unfortunate old dog going on its hind legs in the rain" (VO, 299); as Blain points out, undertones suggest Dr. Johnson's famous comment on women preachers (125). (Rachel is linked with dogs elsewhere; see VO, 46, 144). In the first passage, Richard compares himself to Johnson directly (VO, 53).

23.In Melymbrosia, Helen chases Rachel until they fall and roll on the ground together; Rachel tells her aunt that she is engaged to Terence; with the younger woman "pressed to her," Helen tells Rachel, "'you know I love you, my darling'" (M, 209). In the published version, the scene is more ambiguous; it is unclear whether Rachel is simply dreaming or actually rolling on the ground, and if she is actually rolling, whether she is with Helen or Terence (VO, 290).

24.Motherhood is an important theme in The Voyage Out. References to motherhood range from scattered references to and a portrait of Rachel's mother, Theresa (VO, 82-84, 186-87); to maternal bonds between Helen and Clarissa that exclude Rachel (VO, 38, 43); to cows and a ship bellowing like a cow separated from its calf (VO 86, 120, 126); to discussions of maternity and childlessness (VO, 114-15); to Mrs. Flushing, whose upbringing was "unnatural" since she "had no mother" (VO, 281); to Evelyn, who is the "daughter of a mother and no father" (VO, 190; also 256); and so on. Unlike Evelyn, Rachel herself is, in many ways, the daughter of a father and no mother. Yet she is "like her mother," Helen thinks (VO, 21).

Woolf's approach to maternity is complex. She does not simply assign a "positive" or negative" value to motherhood: the absence of Rachel's mother and Rachel's search for a kind of surrogate mother in Helen or Clarissa would seem to suggest that motherhood is "positive" or valued; and Theresa's absence seems to have a very negative effect on Rachel. On the other hand, there are also suggestions that motherhood is a kind of terror for Rachel, a terror related to marriage: "I won't have eleven children," Rachel suddenly insists. After her death in the published version, Miss Allen finishes reading a book called Maternity; in the draft version, the book is Marriage (VO, 378, M, 241). Woolf takes another look at mother-and-daughterhood in To the Lighthouse; in Chapter Three, I will explore this issue in greater depth.

25.John Bayley comments on the novel Terence reads to Rachel. "In their great scene together," Bayley writes,

> Hewet reads Rachel, to their mutual derision, an extract from a novel which sounds as if it were by Hugh Walpole (the hero is called Hugh), which treats in a pompous manner of modern marriage, combining luscious fantasies with a pseudo-shrewd analysis of the difficulties of a male-female relationship. (74)

Thus the novel Terence reads aloud includes "luscious fantasies" (whose?), but glosses over the real difficulties involved in a male-female relationship. Bayley's discussion of the role "fiction" plays in Rachel's death is interesting. According to Bayley, Rachel dies, in effect, to avoid becoming the kind of character found in Walpole's (or Bennett's?) novels:

> Rachel dies, in effect so as not to become a 'character.' Had she been one, fiction could have taken charge of and naturalised her death, making it like that of Hector or Little Nell or Jo the crossing sweeper. Forster refers to it . . . with a mixture of distaste and respect: it was not death

> in the novel as he understood it . . . . Rachel dies as a kind of feminine gesture, to avoid having to take part in an art form shaped and dominated by the masculine principle. (73)

26.In the draft version, Milton does not appear; Rachel simply falls ill (M, 224).

27.According to Silverman, female sexuality is exhaustively and intensively "spoken," a site where numerous discourses converge. What these discourses speak of, she claims, is female castration or lack:

> "Lack" is inscribed not only at the orifices, but across the entire surface of the female body, and it is precisely at the level of that (constructed) surface that woman is obliged to live a great deal of her cultural existence. (189)

Richard and Terence sitting on Bach can be read as a sign of Rachel's cultural castration: with her music cut off, she is left with "lack." Rachel turns to her body to try to reconstruct it and make room for her own music.

CHAPTER THREE

MOTHER-AND-DAUGHTERHOOD IN TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

> If we keep on speaking the same language together, we're going to reproduce the same history. Begin the same old stories all over again. Don't you think so? Just listen: all round us, men and women sound just the same. The same discussions, the same arguments, the same scenes. The same attractions and separations. The same difficulties, the same impossibility of making connections. The same . . . Same . . . always the same.[1]
>
> Luce Irigaray

Because Woolf is still confined to much the same language in The Voyage Out, what she can say about Mrs. Brown/women is limited. Rachel Vinrace is confronted with a male image of herself; since no other possibilities seem to exist, Rachel must "become a woman" by submitting to this construction--or die. Rachel dies in search of a mother who can provide a female image. Despite Woolf's innovations in her first novel, the novelistic language is still much the same. Mrs. Brown is still sitting in her corner. Although we can catch a glimpse of her, it is only a negative one: she emerges from her corner just long enough to tell us there seems to be no room for her on the train.

But a dozen year later, the language changes. In To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Brown begins to speak. And she is not just one woman. In this later text, she is a community of women,

of mothers and daughters: Cam, Mrs. McNab, Lily, Mrs. Ramsay. Of her own mother's role in "the common life of the family" when she was a child, Virginia Woolf writes: "she was the centre; it was herself." For Virginia, Julia Stephen was "the whole thing," surrounded by a "crowded merry world" that spun around her (MB, 96, 98). In To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay plays a similar role.

Woolf writes about the pursuit of her mother in Moments of Being. Until she was in her forties, she confesses, "the presence of my mother obsessed me." Significantly, she connects this pursuit with both writing and painting--both of which are, according to Gayatri Spivak, "Lily's medium" (40): "if one could give a sense of my mother's personality," Woolf writes, referring to character creation, "one would have to be an artist. It would be as difficult to do that, as it should be done, as to paint a Cézanne" (MB, 99). The pursuit of Woolf's mother is also connected with Mrs. Ramsay. To the Lighthouse is Virginia Woolf's attempt to express her vision of this mysterious woman, her mother Julia Stephen: "I described her and my feeling for her in that book," she writes (MB, 94).[2]

Within the text itself, the artist-daughter Lily struggles with the difficult task Woolf describes: Lily's "project," to borrow Gayatri Spivak's terms, is "to catch the essence of Mrs. Ramsay" (30). If we read this later text as a radical rewriting of Woolf's first novel,[3] it is significant

that this time, the daughter's (Lily's) search for her mother (Mrs. Ramsay) does not end in the daughter's death. A spinster and creator herself, Lily creates other ways of seeing, a new visual language. This new language does not provide clear, authoritative answers: Lily's canvas is "blurred" in the end; her picture "would be hung in attics, she thought; it would be destroyed"; and although Lily has "her vision," it is a vision of erasure or division--a line splitting the canvas in two (TL, 310). This new language makes Lily's search for a female connection in some ways more difficult, yet at the same time, far more successful, than Rachel's search. With the help of a community of women joined by invisible threads--lines of sight and sound--Lily begins to construct a complex, new picture of her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay. She begins to make room for a new construction of Mrs. Brown, a construction that takes into account what Adrienne Rich has called "the great unwritten story": the "cathexis between mother and daughter." As Rich writes, To the Lighthouse is "the most complex and passionate vision of mother-daughter schism in modern literature" (225-27).

Some would suggest that Mrs. Ramsay herself is this new story, this new construction. As Toril Moi notes, Herbert Marder advances "the trite and traditional case" that Mrs. Ramsay is "an androgynous ideal in herself" (14-15). But this is not my suggestion. On the other hand, Heilbrun

claims that Mrs. Ramsay, "far from androgynous and complete," is in fact "as one-sided and life-denying as her husband" (Moi, 15). Although Moi clearly allies herself with Heilbrun, both readings are somewhat reductive: either Mrs. Ramsay is "Woolf's ideal of femininity" (15) or she is a "one-sided," "life-denying" caricature.

As I see it, both readings miss a crucial point: Who is looking at Mrs. Ramsay?[4] In whose eyes is she ideal or, on the other hand, one-sided and life denying? As Woolf points out through Mrs. Brown's experience in the railway carriage, it is important to keep such questions in mind when we consider who Mrs. Ramsay "is." Mrs. Ramsay, Rich notes, "is no simple idealization" (227). But neither is she simply one-sided, since each onlooker sees something different. "Fifty pairs of eyes," Lily thinks, are "not enough to get round that one woman with" (TL, 294). In their descriptions of Mrs. Ramsay, both Marder and Heilbrun seem to forget that the "eyes" make a difference. Both forget the crucial role of the daughter-spectator.

The importance of the spectator has been demonstrated in recent years by feminist film critics. Christine Gledhill notes that a "crucial issue for feminist film criticism is the argument that 'women as women' are not represented in the cinema" (18).[5] Although early work in this area stressed the problem of stereotypical images of women and the "lack of recognizable female heroines," later critics, she says, found

this to be "an impossible, even misguided, quest" (18-19). Eileen McGarry argues, for instance, that it is not simply the images of women but "reality itself" that is "coded in a sexist way" in patriarchal society (Gledhill, 23). But for Gledhill, this sexist code is not smooth or seamless. What the artist is able to represent, she notes, depends partly on the spectator, "on how the audience is situated politically and ideologically" (24, 27-8). Moreover, Gledhill stresses that the "struggle between representations" has its base in "the material practice of real women"; and if the "material contradictions" which inform women's daily lives can be represented, the seams and cracks in the sexist code can be revealed (24).[6]

De Lauretis clearly explains why the notion of "images of women" is problematic. To begin with, she argues, such a notion relies "on an often crude opposition of positive and negative" that mirrors popular stereotypes of women ("the nice girl versus the bad woman," for example). More importantly, however, this notion does not take into account the role of the spectator:

> For it assumes that images are directly absorbed by the viewers, that each image is immediately readable and meaningful in and of itself. . . . Viewers, in turn, are presumed to be at once historically innocent and purely receptive, as if they too existed in the world immune from other social practices and discourses, yet immediately susceptible to images. . . . But this is not the case. And it is precisely the feminist critique of representation that has conclusively

> demonstrated how any image in our culture--let alone any image of woman--is placed within, and read from, the encompassing context of patriarchal ideologies, whose values and effects . . . permeate the entire social fabric and hence all social subjects, women as well as men.
>
> (Alice Doesn't, 38)

That images are not directly absorbed by viewers applies not just to cinema, but to narrative fiction as well: the political and ideological positions of Marder and Heilbrun, for example, obviously play a role in their different readings of Mrs. Ramsay.

More important, however, is Woolf's exploration of such issues within the text of To the Lighthouse itself. De Lauretis argues that because women cannot simply be seen as historically innocent, we should think of images not as "good" or "bad," but rather "as (potentially) productive of contradictions in both subjective and social processes." This new approach to images of women leads her to a series of important questions: "How are images perceived? How do we see? . . . . What about language? Or sound? What relations do language and sound bear to images?" Such questions about spectatorship and imaging are questions that Virginia Woolf begins to explore in To the Lighthouse, half a century before feminist film critics begin discussing these issues.

According to De Lauretis, the project of contemporary feminist cinema

> is not so much "to make visible the invisible," as the saying goes, or to destroy vision altogether, as to construct another (object of) vision and the conditions of visibility for a different social subject. (AD,68-69)

De Lauretis' description could equally be used to describe Lily's project: in De Lauretis' terms, the artist-daughter Lily "construct[s] other ways of seeing" (ibid, 63). With the insight of her new visual language, Lily re-views and recreates Mrs. Ramsay and, consequently, herself.[7]

I. "The Window": Mrs. Ramsay framed . . .

Lily's effort to see differently begins in Part I, with her study of the male gaze, or Mr. Bankes looking at Mrs. Ramsay. The role of the spectator is clearly emphasized in the published version of the text when Lily becomes the spectator once removed, looking at the one who looks: "For him to gaze as Lily saw him gazing at Mrs. Ramsay," Woolf writes, "was a rapture, equivalent, Lily felt, to the loves of dozens of young men" (TL, 73). The male gaze and the heterosexual economy that Mrs. Ramsay supports with her constant matchmaking efforts--(in the draft version, Mrs. Ramsay "lead[s] her victims, ~~garlanded~~, to the altar" [TL MS, 168])--are clearly linked here.[8]

Mr. Bankes' gaze is also linked with Mr. Ramsay's: Like Mr. Ramsay, Bankes is pleased with the sight of Mrs. Ramsay reading a fairy tale to her son. Earlier, Mr. Ramsay looks

up from the terrace at his wife and child in the window and sees "an illustration, a confirmation of something." The sight fortifies him and allows him to continue his pursuit of the elusive letter "R" (TL, 53). Echoing this link between Mrs. Ramsay's silent figure and her husband's splendid mind, Bankes connects the sight of Mrs. Ramsay with "the solution of a scientific problem." If Mr. Ramsay is "safe" when he looks at his wife and child, Bankes finds "that barbarity was tamed, the reign of chaos subdued" (TL, 52, 74). For both Bankes and Ramsay, the sight of Mrs. Ramsay is reassuring and is connected with their ability to control nature with science/philosophy. As Foucault's study of Jeremy Bentham's plan of the Panopticon in Discipline and Punish suggests (Doane, 13), Bankes' one-way gaze places him in a position of power relative to Mrs. Ramsay.[9]

For Lily, however, the consequences of the male gaze are very different. When she looks at Mr. Bankes, then at her painting, then at Mr. Bankes again, she realizes that Bankes' way of looking at Mrs. Ramsay somehow excludes her own view:

> Looking along the level of Mr. Bankes's glance at her, she thought that no woman could worship another woman in the way he worshipped; they could only seek shelter under the shade which Mr. Bankes extended over them both. (TL, 75)

Mr. Bankes' gaze extends a shadow over the two women. But if Mrs. Ramsay seeks shelter, it is not enough for Lily. When Lily feels herself praised along with Mrs. Ramsay, she takes

"shelter from the reverence which covered all women." Her vision seems to be threatened by his reverence. So Lily steals a look, instead, at her own picture, reassuring herself that her vision is still intact (TL, 75).

Female spectators, De Lauretis notes, are excluded in classical cinema, since only two "polarities of identification" are provided: "with the masculine, active gaze and narrative point of view or with the feminine, specular, masochistic position" (AD, 57, 78). In To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay represents the latter. Her specularity is underscored by the title of the first section: framed by the window, Mrs. Ramsay becomes an icon, an object to be looked at, as Rigney suggests (240). Although in some ways, Mrs. Ramsay is a powerful figure, her power essentially derives from a form of masochism.

Mrs. Ramsay's complicity with patriarchal values gives her the benefit of limited power; but this power can only be obtained at the cost of deliberate self-suppression. As Rosenman bluntly states, the scene involving Mrs. Ramsay's "metaphorical rape at the hands of her husband" reveals "the masochistic pleasure of being the Angel in the House":

> Mrs. Ramsay's power is ultimately self-devouring, its expression a cycle of self-assertion and self-abnegation. . . . the moment of successful creation reveals a hidden paradox in marriage: the husband may have the power to demand, but he is under his wife's power when he receives. Mrs. Ramsay denies this meaning . . . . She repudiates her potency with thoughts of extreme, even melodramatic self-

> abnegation . . . . This self-flagellation is her penance for having the power to heal. (96-97)

Although "masochism" is perhaps a strong term to use here, a number of critics have suggested a connection between Mrs. Ramsay's power and her self-suppression. Mitchell Leaska, who admires Mrs. Ramsay for her "selflessness" (66), is ultimately disappointed by what he sees as a kind of sham: her "self-depreciating apparatus" is simply a device for "gaining sympathy," he claims, and for "getting people to do what she wished" (70). According to Phyllis Rose, Mrs. Ramsay "gains immense power precisely because of her self-abnegation" (154). And Spivak suggests that Mrs. Ramsay's power derives from "her matchmaking"--in other words, her complicity with the heterosexual code of a patriarchal society--and "her manipulation of men through deliberate self-suppression" (32).

Perhaps Mrs. Ramsay "triumphs" at the end of the first section; but she does so by allowing Mr. Ramsay's mind to stand, Woolf writes, "like a raised hand shadowing her mind."[10] She does so by echoing her husband: "No, I shan't finish it." "Yes, you were right. It's going to rain tomorrow" (TL, 184-6).[11] Mrs. Ramsay, Rigney argues, has made a kind of bargain with the self: in order to obtain some control over her world, she forfeits identity. "Mrs. Ramsay quite consciously serves the traditional function of women

which Woolf describes in A Room of One's Own," Rigney states; "that of liar, flatterer, and looking glass ' . . . possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size'" (246, 243). Mrs. Ramsay's triumph is the triumph, in effect, of embracing her own defeat, her own secondary status. it is the triumph of accepting--willingly--her own specular, masochistic position.

Bankes and Mr. Ramsay place Mrs. Ramsay on a pedestal, gaze at her, worship her, mould her into the form of the perfect madonna whose posture and characteristics Julia Kristeva describes in "Stabat Mater": She is the courtly lady, Kristeva writes, the "focal point of men's desires and aspirations" (cf. TL, 52, 53, 57, 73). In some representations, Kristeva argues, the madonna integrates "a certain feminine masochism" with "gratification and jouissance" (cf. TL, 58-61). She lowers her head before her son (cf. TL, 48, 51, 76, 264), and her modesty and humility are "accompanied by the immeasurable pride of the one who knows she is also his wife and daughter." In "numerous variations of the Stabat Mater," her maternal love (like the shawl Mrs. Ramsay wraps around the death's head [TL, 172]) gives her the power to defy death. As representative of the repressed semiotic, she "necessarily becomes both patron saint and privileged object" of the arts, including painting (170-76).

Mrs. Ramsay, the madonna figure in the window, and Bankes, the one who looks at Mrs. Ramsay, exemplify to a great extent the poles that De Lauretis describes. But with her narrative strategy, Woolf weakens the connection between the masculine, active gaze and narrative point of view. In the draft version of To the Lighthouse, Susan Dick points out, the narrative is most often told through the voice of the omniscient narrator--the voice of authority. In the published version, however, the narrative is presented from shifting or multiple points of view (TL MS, 22). The change is significant; as Alex Zwerdling states, in To the Lighthouse, "formerly silent underlings are given a voice." Citing Mitchell Leaska's statistical study of whose consciousness we follow in the novel, Zwerdling points out that Woolf makes certain that we see the world she depicts "largely through the eyes of women, children, and servants." With Woolf's manipulation of point of view, as Zwerdling puts it, "something like a palace revolution has taken place . . . [T]he underlings have seized control of the instruments of communication" (196-97).

Within the text, Lily is still caught between the two poles: the active, masculine gaze and the specular, masochistic madonna-mother. While Woolf herself struggles with narrative form, within the text, Lily mirrors Woolf's struggle to shake up this polarity by attempting to create a new kind of vision. If the artist-daughter cannot look at

Mrs. Ramsay with worship (as Lily herself notes), she must find a new way to look at her; she must construct her otherwise. She does not deny the power of Mr. Bankes' view: on the contrary, his is the dominant view; and for Bankes, Mrs. Ramsay is the way he sees her; his gaze constructs her so.[12] But Lily is concerned with who or what Mrs. Ramsay is for Lily herself. She desires "not knowledge but unity"; she wants to become one with Mrs. Ramsay, the object she adores (TL, 79). Seeking a gaze (and a voice) of her own, Lily adds a different pair of eyes to Mr. Bankes' gaze:

> Looking along his beam she added to it her different ray, thinking that she was unquestionably the loveliest of people (bowed over her book); the best perhaps; but also, different too from the perfect shape which one saw there. But why different, and how different? . . . . How did she differ? (TL, 75-76)

Looking along his beam, Lily superimposes her own ray. She "deconstructs" the Madonna and child icon and surprises Bankes with the beginnings of a different view, a simple triangular shape:

> Simple, obvious, commonplace, as it was, Mr. Bankes was interested. Mother and child then--objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother was famous for her beauty--might be reduced, he pondered, to a purple shadow without irreverence. (TL, 81)

On one level, Lily's painting represents a shift from the representational art Bankes admires to post-impressionism.

But it is not simply the form of her art that is revolutionary; her art suggests the possibility of a different kind of relationship with and view of Mrs. Ramsay. Lily re-views and recreates Mrs. Ramsay, calling into question the patriarchal definition of Mrs. Ramsay as the Madonna--the courtly lady and object of "universal veneration."

Lily reverences Mrs. Ramsay in a different way, with "a shadow here and a light there." Bankes, who has "never considered" the question of lights and shadows (indeed, he admits honestly, "his prejudices were on the other side"), is blind to the shadow (TL, 81-82). As Lily notes earlier in the text, his gaze extends a shadow over the two women (TL, 75); the dark patch is out of his line of sight. Lily is sitting elsewhere, and from her position, she sees the shadow. Lily's view of Mrs. Ramsay includes a dark side, a shadow (a core of darkness? a purple warship clouding sexuality? a raised hand shadowing Mrs. Ramsay's mind?) that Bankes has not seen or considered, although the shadow is created, at least in part, by his gaze.

At one point, Mrs. Ramsay is knitting and thinking alone. Although her beauty makes her a light to others, when she is alone, Mrs. Ramsay becomes "a wedge-shaped core of darkness." The image is particularly striking, since it clearly mirrors Lily's revisionary picture of motherhood as a triangular shadow/shape; moreover, in the draft version,

where the importance of Lily's role has not yet been fully established,[13] the image is not present. This darkness, another side of the Angel in the House, is "something invisible to others," Mrs. Ramsay thinks (TL, 95-97). But Lily is insistent about the shadow. Her picture includes both light and darkness: "A light here **required** a shadow there," she tells Bankes (TL, 82; emphasis added). Lily's picture of Mrs. Ramsay includes what Bankes' gaze represses: the specularity and masochism inherent in the madonna icon; but also, what Rosenman calls "[a]ll that remains of feminine inviolability" (98), the wedge-shaped core of darkness.

Like Mrs. Ramsay herself, the hedge that Mr. Ramsay looks at repeatedly (TL, 56, 66-67, 98-99) is dark. Although he looks "into its intricacy, its darkness" (TL, 99), he cannot seem to make anything of it. The hedge, like the sternness that makes Mrs. Ramsay "remote," seems to be some kind of inexplicable boundary for him. On the other hand, Mr. Ramsay's daughter Cam (who is linked with Lily in Part III) tries to see through the hedge; she dashes past, impelled perhaps (Mrs. Ramsay thinks) by a vision "of a fairy kingdom on the far side of the hedge" (TL, 82, 84). While Cam dashes past, Lily gropes for her vision "among hedges and houses and mothers and children"; she tries to see something in this darkness.

With Mr. Tansley whispering in her ear, "Women can't paint, women can't write," Lily tries to find a new vision of

Mrs. Ramsay. The blues and greens and burning colors of her picture (inherited perhaps from the friends of Mrs. Ramsay's grandmother who "mixed their own colours" [TL, 24]) are a sign of her defiance of Mr. Paunceforte, whose fashionable and orthodox school of art exhorts her "to see everything pale, elegant, semitransparent" (TL, 32). And the shadows mark the difference between her view and Bankes', a questioning of the traditional picture of Madonna and child. Lily strives to create what De Lauretis has called "a view from 'elsewhere'" (Technologies, 25). She strives to see differently. "But this is what I see, this is what I see," Lily cries, protesting the dominance of Mr. Paunceforte's artistic school, certainly, but protesting also the patriarchal hegemony of sight, vision, and spectatorship (TL, 32, 75).

With centuries of traditions like the cult of Mary against her, Lily has a difficult project ahead of her. In Woolf's terms, she must think "against the current, not with it"; and as Woolf notes, the "current flows fast and furious" ("Thoughts on Peace," E, iv, 174). Although Lily begins the picture of the purple triangle in Part I, she cannot complete it. Leaning her head in the maternal lap, seeking not knowledge but unity, she finds only that her desires are frustrated: "Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing!" she cries (TL, 79).[6] The artist-daughter seeks unity where unity is,

strictly speaking, impossible, since Lily refuses to become the Angel in the House herself.

As Rosenman points out, in Part I, "the daughter is devalued and dispossessed" (104). The "iconography of the Madonna and Jesus," she notes, "leaves no room for a daughter" (99): Cam is banished from the fairytale reading (TL, 86) and unlike Paul and Minta, the spinster-artist Lily is "solitary, left out," since she does not participate in Mrs. Ramsay's heterosexual matchmaking (TL, 153).

Although there are hints of a matrilineal line in Part I, the line is fragmented and broken. Abel notes that the metaphor of jewels repeatedly celebrates female, especially generational bonding in Woolf's texts. Minta loses her grandmother's brooch on the beach, a brooch which, Abel argues, "suggests not only the conventional virginity, but also a female heritage, disrupted equally by marriage" (186). Jewels also connect Rose with her mother, Mrs. Ramsay: the ceremony of choosing jewels gives "form to 'some deep, some buried, some quite speechless feeling that one had for one's mother at Rose's age'" (193-4; TL 123). But the link between mother and daughter is severed by Mrs. Ramsay. Avoiding her own face in the glass, Mrs. Ramsay looks out and sees the birds she has nicknamed Joseph and Mary; she describes the sight as "the loveliest of all to her."[15] Her shortsightedness prevents her from seeing the couple clearly; but her hope "that Rose would see it more

clearly than she could" is ironically undercut by Mrs. Ramsay's own position, her severing of the mother-daughter link: while Rose is choosing jewels, Mrs. Ramsay looks at Joseph and Mary and wishes simply that Rose "would make haste" (TL, 121-23). The mysterious ritual that bonds mother and daughter must be cut off in order to hurry to dinner; and like Mrs. Ramsay herself, Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party (which I will discuss further in Part III) achieves unity only at the cost of female self-suppression.

We think back through our mothers if we are women, Woolf writes (RO, 72-73). Lily herself is caught: as the daughter-artist, she must "think back through her mother"; at the same time, she must entirely reject the specular, masochistic position of her spiritual mother. "It is only after the death of Mrs. Ramsay in Part II," Rosenman notes, "that Lily completes the painting" (104).

II. "Time Passes": Mrs. Ramsay's tune, Mrs. Ramsay mirrored . . .

According to Gayatri Spivak, Part II of To the Lighthouse "narrates the production of a discourse of madness" (35). In Part II, emphasis is placed on night, darkness, blindness, silence: "It's almost too dark to see," Andrew remarks at the beginning of the first section; the lamps are extinguished, the moon sinks, and "nothing, it seemed, could survive the flood, the profusion of darkness"

(TL, 189, 195). Yet something does survive the flood. With the arrival of the old washerwoman who comes to clean the Ramsay's summer house,

> the shadow wavered; light bent to its own image in adoration on the bedroom wall; and Mrs. McNab, tearing the veil of silence with hands that had stood in the wash-tub, grinding it with boots that had crunched the shingle, came as directed to open all windows, and dust the bedrooms. (TL, 196)

As Zwerdling notes, Mrs. McNab "takes over Part II of the novel almost entirely" (196). Mrs. McNab brings light. Her power to "tear" and "grind" forces of silence is in marked contrast with her physical appearance: "Bowed down" with weariness, "creaking and groaning," she hobbles along, painfully cleaning, slowly renewing, "staying the corruption and rot" of Mrs. Ramsay's old house (TL, 197). Her old song brings "some incorrigible hope," some "cleavage of the dark," even "[v]isions of joy." She is described as a "care-taking woman" (TL, 196), and take care she does, rescuing the house item by item "from the pool of Time that was fast closing over" (TL, 209). Mrs. McNab is the incarnation of what Woolf calls "the true figure of womanhood" in her essay "Men and Women": "the bent figure with the knobbed hands and the bleared eyes" (WW, 67).

In Part II, the madonna icon is shattered. Woolf uses a maternal metaphor to describe Mrs. McNab's rescue mission: the old woman gives "birth" to the house (TL, 210).[16] The

ability to rescue the house is a kind of maternal power. But Mrs. McNab is no madonna figure. The birth is "rusty" and "labourious"; and the housekeeper prefers "drink and gossip" to the mystical questions of the searcher (TL, 197-98). She manages to stave off the forces of decay; but old and bent herself, she obviously cannot make them stop.

Mrs. McNab mirrors Mrs. Ramsay, picking up where Mrs. Ramsay left off years ago. In Part I, Mrs. Ramsay notices the house becoming shabbier, anticipating Mrs. McNab's rescue mission (TL, 44). Mrs. Ramsay's characteristic gestures--"She opened bedroom windows. She shut doors"--are echoed by Mrs. McNab (TL 76, 196).[17] In Part II, Mrs. Ramsay herself is dead, and the shawl she used to cover the death's head loosens fold by fold; like Mrs. McNab's, Mrs. Ramsay's power to defy death is an illusion.

In Part I, Lily's gaze alters the view of Mrs. Ramsay, the woman who is the enlarging mirror held up to man. In Part II, Woolf uses mirrors--the place where a child first constructs "his" identity according to Lacan (1-7)--to connect Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Ramsay. It is as if, after Mrs. Ramsay's death, Woolf returns with Mrs. McNab to the origins of identity in order to reconstruct the picture of Mrs. Ramsay. Time passes, Mrs. Ramsay dies, and the mirror breaks (TL, 202). Gender is confused and nature becomes lustfully autoerotic (Spivak, 36-37) in a violent return to a kind of pre-Oedipal madness. Chaos reigns. With the War and the

death of Mrs. Ramsay, the comfortable and flattering image of man reflected in his mirror--the notion that the "beauty outside mirrored beauty within" (201)--is shattered.

But without the mirror, no image can be created. Without the symbolic order, language, discourse, and narrative are impossible (162).[18] The mirror must be reconstructed. As Gayatri Spivak points out, Mrs. McNab "is allowed the hint of a power to recuperate the mirror" (38).

We do not know, Spivak notes, whether Mrs. McNab looks at herself in the mirror at this point; we only know that Mrs. McNab "stood arms akimbo in front of the looking glass" (TL, 203). In an earlier passage, Mrs. McNab clearly looks at herself: "with her sidelong leer" she "stood and gaped in the glass, aimlessly smiling" (TL, 197). Mrs. McNab looks in the mirror that Mrs. Ramsay refuses to look at directly, the mirror that tells Mrs. Ramsay she is growing old (TL, 121, 149), the mirror that threatens, perhaps, to construct differently this time, or that threatens, perhaps next time, to reflect an image that strays from the correct one, the Madonna/Angel icon.

Whether or not Mrs. McNab sees her own reflection the second time she looks, she does see Mrs. Ramsay (TL, 204). Touching Mrs. Ramsay's clothing, picking her flowers, and looking at her possessions--boots and shoes, a brush and comb (TL, 204)--Mrs. McNab creates a link with the missing woman. She sees a vision of Mrs. Ramsay with her flowers, her

washing, her children; a vision of her in motion. Although the washerwoman sees Mrs. Ramsay from a great distance, as if through a telescope, Mrs. Ramsay is no longer on a pedestal or framed in a window. She sees Mrs. Ramsay moving and hears her speaking (TL, 205). The perfect, telescopic vision of Mrs. Ramsay travels along like a frame cut from a moving picture, "wandering over the bedroom wall, up the dressing-table, across the wash-stand" in front of Mrs. McNab as she continues her housework (TL, 205).[19]

The end of Part II focuses on Lily. In the striking final passage of "Time Passes" that Woolf added to the published version of To the Lighthouse (the passage is not present in the holograph draft), Lily Briscoe stirs

> in her sleep. She clutched at her blankets as a faller clutches at the turf on the edge of a cliff. Her eyes opened wide. Here she was again, she thought sitting bolt upright in bed. Awake. (TL, 214)

This passage, with its emphasis on sight, leads to Lily's second attempt to reconstruct Mrs. Ramsay. This time, however, Bankes' gaze is gone--or, more precisely, relegated to the past. And Lily's gaze is linked, instead, to another woman's gaze, another daughter's gaze. In Part II, after Mrs. McNab recuperates the mirror, a "veil" on Lily's eyes is broken; and Lily's eyes, the "Chinese eyes"[20] that are often mentioned (eg, TL, 234), are wide open.

III. "The Lighthouse": The daughter's (re)vision . . .

In Part III of To the Lighthouse, Spivak notes, Lily grasps at two visions: the first has to do with boats and sails; and the second is a vision of Mrs. Ramsay (40-41). According to Spivak, the sailing vision is connected with plenitude and its betrayal. But it is also a vision of the daughter aboard the sailboat, Cam, and of the father-daughter-son triangle Cam finds herself in. In this last section, I will discuss both of these visions. In my view, Lily's (re)vision of Mrs. Ramsay and the completion of her painting in Part II are connected with Cam and her trip to the Lighthouse.

The triangle and the sailing gaze . . .

In Part I, Abel notes, Cam is minimally outlined. Nevertheless, she joins the finale in Part III even though the "arrival at the Lighthouse caps James's drama exclusively: Cam has never desired this journey." According to Abel, Cam is still only a shadowy, attenuated presence in Part II (172). But as Leaska's statistical study indicates, next to Lily's, the consciousness we follow most often in Part III is Cam's (Leaska, 208). Although critics have systematically neglected Cam in favour of Lily and James (Abel, 172), at least in terms of number of lines, Cam appears to play a relatively prominent role. Why is Cam

included on the journey to the Lighthouse, and what is the reason for her relative prominence in Part III?

Read biographically, Woolf's fictional counterpart is split into two daughter figures, Cam and Lily. As Abel notes, by her name and her position in the family, Cam is Woolf's most literal narrative counterpart (172). After Cam, James, and Mr. Ramsay leave, Lily feels "curiously divided, as if one part of her"--the other half of the daughter?--"were drawn out there" with them (TL, 233-34). Because the previous scene involves Mr. Ramsay and Lily--Mr. Ramsay demands sympathy and Lily, pulling her skirts about her, refuses to comply--we may perhaps conclude that Lily's sense of division has to do with Mr. Ramsay.

But another reading, one that focuses on Cam, is possible. Although the father-mother-son triad in Part I (Mr. Ramsay-Mrs. Ramsay-James) becomes a father-daughter-son triad on board the sailboat in Part III, "the median feminine position," Abel writes, "is unchanged." Cam takes her mother's place. As Abel points out, Woolf inconsistently describes the seating arrangement on board the boat to conform with the emotional topography (182): at one point, Cam is "alone in the bow" (a figurehead at the front of the boat, in a position of false prominence that allows her neither to steer nor to command); in a later passage, however, Cam is "sitting between them [James and Mr. Ramsay], gazing at the shore" (TL, 242, 251). Like her mother before

her, Cam is both alone and in the middle: alone like the virgin-mother icon in the window; and in the middle like the fertile, fountain-like mother between father and son in the garden.

In Part I, Lily seeks unity with Mrs. Ramsay; and in the opening pages of Part III, her mind is filled with echoes and reminders of Mrs. Ramsay (TL, 217-20). Even when she gathers her skirts in at her feet, Lily is thinking of Mrs. Ramsay, comparing herself unfavorably with her: it is all Mrs. Ramsay's fault; she is dead; I ought to sympathetically expand, Lily thinks, the way Mrs. Ramsay used to; but I cannot; I must be a peevish, dried-up old maid; I will praise his boots and draw my skirts in instead (TL, 224-32). Although Mr. Ramsay's departure certainly affects Lily, the division he makes her feel itself links Lily with Mrs. Ramsay and Cam. Like Lily, but unlike James, Cam is exposed "to this pressure and division of feeling" that Mr. Ramsay causes (252-53). Lily feels divided when Mr. Ramsay leaves; but part of the division arises because someone is leaving with him: Cam, the other daughter figure and Lily's counterpart, who takes Mrs. Ramsay's position in the triangle.

In Part III, Lily once again tackles the picture of the triangular shadow she left unfinished ten years earlier. This time, however, part of her is drawn out to the sailboat; this time, the youngest Ramsay daughter and the father-

daughter-son triangle in which she is caught enter into or are superimposed onto the picture of Mrs. Ramsay.

But with Cam, there is a difference. Although the median feminine position remains, the triangle has--if only ever so slightly--changed. The Oedipal triangle, Rosenman notes, weakens with Cam's presence (106; in Part I, Cam was banished from the reading of the Fisherman's Wife [TL, 86]). And Spivak suggests that the Oedipal scene which Cam and James go through together questions the orthodox psychoanalytic position: in this case, according to Spivak, both father and mother are givers of law and language (39). Finally, when Cam is forced to choose between father and son just as Mrs. Ramsay was asked to do in the garden earlier, Cam's solution is less self destructive: "fierce and loyal to the compact" with James to resist tyranny to the death, Cam manages nevertheless to pass on a silent token of love to her father (252).

Although, according to Abel, Cam's story is "a paradigmatic story of the daughter who thinks back through her father, a story of narrative imprisonment" (188), Cam does not abnegate herself the way her mother does. Cam tries to see further than her mother. When Lily looks along the line of Bankes' gaze, it is a one-way beam; but when Lily looks at Cam, this time, the girl who is looked at looks back. Lily's gaze and Cam's are linked. And the central sections of Part III can be read as a silent exchange between

the two daughters: Lily looks out to sea and completes her vision of Mrs. Ramsay; Cam returns Lily's gaze and renegotiates or slightly shifts her position in the triangle.

Key passages that open and close a number of sections focus on the daughters' gaze. At the end of section iv, Cam, weighed down by her father's tyranny, silently looks toward shore, thinking they have no suffering there (TL, 253). Section v opens with Lily returning her gaze: "Yes, that is their boat, Lily Briscoe decided." She thinks of Cam and James sitting silently and, remembering her own encounter with Mr. Ramsay, feels weighed down like Cam (TL, 253-54). Section vii ends with Lily: "'Where are they now?' Lily thought, looking out to sea." Cam returns her gaze in viii: "They don't feel a thing there," Cam thinks as she looks at the shore (TL, 271-72). In section ix, Lily echoes Cam's notion of peace in the distance, picking up on Cam's thoughts as she picked up on her feelings earlier: "The sea without a stain on it, thought Lily Briscoe, still standing and looking out over the bay. . . . It was so calm; it was so quiet" (TL, 279). Cam answers, describing the land from a distance in section x: "It was like that then, the island, thought Cam." And as if to sum up and finally close the silent exchange between the two daughters, Lily looks out at the sea without a stain on it and concludes: "So much depends, then, . . . on distance" (TL, 280, 284).[21]

Lily's (re)vision . . .

Moving trees . . .

At the dinner table in Part I, "for the hundred and fiftieth time" Lily renounces the experiment; she bows "her whole being" (as Mrs. Ramsay bows her head) before Charles Tansley, flattering him when he insults and belittles her (TL, 138-39). But in Part III, Lily refuses to follow the code of behaviour that Mrs. Ramsay re-enforces at the dinner table. When Mr. Ramsay approaches her, demanding sympathy, Lily remains "stuck." She refuses to turn her face into "a rapture of sympathy" and a "glow" of "self-surrender" as Mrs. Ramsay would (TL, 224-25). Instead, when Mr. Ramsay's self-pity spreads itself in pools at her feet, she keeps hold of her paintbrush and simply draws "her skirts a little closer round her ankles, lest she should get wet" (TL, 228). This time, despite her feelings of guilt and inadequacy described earlier, Lily refuses to become the enlarging mirror that Woolf describes in A Room of One's Own.

Most critics read the dinner scene in Part I very positively.[22] Rose calls the dinner "Mrs. Ramsay's triumph," but she does not connect this triumph with female self-suppression. For Rose, Mrs. Ramsay's dinner is precisely equivalent to what Woolf herself is doing with her art (270). In an early review, Jean-Jacques Mayoux claims that the dinner becomes "all rhythmic movement and collective emotion," since Mrs. Ramsay brings people together in an

eternal, harmonious arrangement. "They will pass, but the order, the harmony which exists between them at this moment," Mayoux writes, "is permanent, eternal, placed outside all time and change, like all perfect communion, all order, all harmony." Harmony, then, means eternal, fixed orderliness; this is the only kind of harmony that exists for Mayoux, and it cannot, he insists, be changed.

Significantly, Mayoux lists those who are united by this kind of fixed order: "William Bankes and Carmichael and Ramsay and even Tansley"--but not, of course, Lily Briscoe. According to Mayoux, the ones united by Mrs. Ramsay's dinner "are men," and their need to be thus united is "an especially masculine characteristic" (Majumdar, 216-17). Perhaps E. M. Forster has his kind of "harmonious," masculinist unity and order in mind when he writes:

> the dinner of union . . . exhales affection and poetry and loveliness, so that all the characters [which ones?] see the best in one another . . . and one of them, Lily Briscoe [why Lily?] carries away a recollection of reality [what kind of reality?]. (20)

As Ruotolo notes, the dinner draws everyone into a protective circle only by uniting them against a common cause, "against that fluidity out there" (TL, 147).[23] Although such events "shimmer with Victorian authenticity," Ruotolo writes, "they remain for Woolf essentially reactionary celebrations of a paradigmatic wholeness that denies every premise of

modernism" (123); appropriately, the scene ends with Mrs. Ramsay looking back at what is "already the past" (TL, 168).

Lily is interested in a kind of wholeness that goes beyond the paradigmatic and synchronic--to use Saussure's terms--toward the syntagmatic and diachronic.[24] Like Mrs. Ramsay, Lily seeks some kind of unity and permanence. One of Lily's moments of illumination occurs when she traces her gifts to Mrs. Ramsay's: in her own sphere, Lily, like Mrs. Ramsay, tries to make of the moment something permanent. "'Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!' she repeated. She owed it all to her" (TL, 240-41). As Rosenman notes, if Lily rejects Mrs. Ramsay, she also claims her as an artistic precursor (112; also Rose, 169). But while Lily perhaps models her art on Mrs. Ramsay's, she is not interested in freezing the moment. She does not say with Mrs. Ramsay, "Life stand still here" (TL, 240). Instead, Lily moves toward a vision of Mrs. Ramsay that involves context and change, the particular rather than the universal, and motion rather than stasis.[25]

Perhaps more important than Lily's emulation of her mentor, however, is her recovery of that which Mrs. Ramsay excluded and that which was excluded or supressed in Mrs. Ramsay herself (the two exclusions are of course related).[26] Near the beginning of Part III, Lily's thoughts begin to wander. Doors open and bang and swing to and fro (the female tune of Mrs. Ramsay starts) in her mind, and Lily begins to question stillness: "Why is one sitting here, after all?"

(TL, 218). With all the flux and commotion that was banished from the dinner party running through her mind, the artist-daughter wonders how to bring the parts together (TL, 220).

With her back to the window, and her thoughts on escaping from Mr. Ramsay (who keeps her from painting), Lily remembers something she repeated to herself at the dinner table, a thought she seemed to cling to:

> Suddenly she remembered. . . . There had been a problem about a foreground of a picture. Move the tree to the middle, she had said. She had never finished that picture. She would paint that picture now. (TL, 220-21).

The strategy is a double movement on Lily's part. By moving the tree to the middle, Lily reincludes with a stroke that which was excluded from Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party: "that fluidity out there," the external, natural world (nature is feminine, Spivak reminds us [37]), the forces of dissolution that Mrs. McNab confronts in Part II. Ruotolo points out that throughout Woolf's novels, windows usually welcome the external world. At the dinner party, however, "they preclude it. Fragile 'panes of glass' hold back an oceanic darkness that seems to threaten everyone"--everyone, that is, with one significant exception--"but Lily" (123).

Although Lily repudiates the heterosexual code enforced by Mrs. Ramsay ("it flashed upon her that she would move the tree to the middle, and need never marry anybody" [TL, 262]), by moving the tree to the middle, Lily also moves Mrs. Ramsay

herself firmly to the middle of her painting. According to Sandra Gilbert, Lily's vision involves Mrs. Ramsay and a goddess-like revision of nature, "for in order to recapture Mrs. Ramsay she decides that she will 'move the tree'" (218). Mrs. Ramsay herself is linked with trees (Ruotolo, 131). She sits before her husband, "like a tree which has been tossing and quivering and now, when the breeze falls, settles" (TL, 177). In Mr. Ramsay's presence, she becomes still and quiet like a tree, which is just what he seems to be tellng her to do: "don't say anything; just sit there." (TL, 179). And when she notices that the room has changed after dinner and become the past, she mimics the trees she sees throughout the barrier-like window. Mrs. Ramsay tries to pull herself back to the dinner table code of eternal stillness:

> So she righted herself after the shock of the event, and quite unconsciously and incongruously, used the branches of the elm trees outside to help her stabilize her position. Her world was changing: they were still. The event had given her a sense of movement. All must be in order. She must get that right and that right, she thought, insensibly approving of the dignity of the trees' stillness. (TL, 169; Ruotolo, 131)

Righting and stabilizing herself, Mrs. Ramsay tries to ensure that everything stays still. Although trees move in the wind, no movement must be allowed. Order must prevail.

Swimming and casting shadows . . .

Lily welcomes, or at least does not hold back, the oceanic darkness that is held back at Mrs. Ramsay's dinner. She jumps into the waters of annihilation as she thinks of Mrs. Ramsay and the pain of wanting her increases (TL, 269). When she begins painting, she imagines herself as a swimmer, immersed in the waves, the fluidity and flux that Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party excludes (TL, 235-36). The figure she sees through Bankes' eyes in Part III (a memory of the young Mrs. Ramsay) stands among the fountains, peaceful and silent, with downcast eyes. She is astonishingly beautiful, but beauty has a penalty: "It stilled life--froze it" (264). In contrast, when Lily begins painting, the rhythm is dictated by what she sees. Her hand quivers with life, and Lily herself becomes, like Mrs. Ramsay earlier, "a fountain spurting over" (TL, 237-38).[27] As she paints, it is as if, with her fluid, rhythmic movements, she becomes one with Mrs. Ramsay, the object she adores.

Lily's final vision is not of Mrs. Ramsay and James, as in Part I, but of Mrs. Ramsay alone, flicking her needles. The vision is a miracle, an ecstasy; but at the same time, Lily does not simply leave this world. Her vision is "on a level with ordinary experience" (TL, 300). After she has her moment of vision, moreover, Lily returns to the everyday world in order to share and thus complete her vision (TL, 300, 310).

In the holograph draft, the vision is made possible when the window is shoved open and a shadow is cast by someone inside. The vision is of Prue, Andrew, and Mrs. Ramsay, the three Ramsays who have died: "Was she not now almost in their presence?" Lily wonders (TL MS, 345; emphasis added). In the published text, however, the vision is of Mrs. Ramsay alone. The window is now lightened; and when the person inside settles down, they cast "an odd-shaped triangular shadow over the step" (TL, 299-300). The shadow recalls both the wedge-shaped core of darkness and Lily's painting of mother and child as a triangular purple shape. When a wave of white goes over the window pane--the waves Lily swims through as she paints, the waters of annihilation, the fluid and flux held back by the window at dinner--Lily cries out: "Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!" And after she shares this vision which will "be destroyed. But what did it matter?"--this vision which cannot be frozen, which must be perpetually remade (TL, 309-10, 270)--Lily draws a line of erasure and division through the centre, through the tree, through Mrs. Ramsay:

> With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.

NOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1.Irigaray, "When Our Lips Speak Together," in This Sex Which is Not One, 205.

2.For a good analysis of the differences between Julia Stephen and her fictional counterpart Mrs. Ramsay, see Zwerdling, 187-91. As Zwerdling notes, Woolf resented the common assumption that Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay "simply were her parents": in To the Lighthouse, Woolf "shape[s] her characters according to her own vision," not according to "documentary evidence about her parents" (181). (For an interesting analysis of the relation of Mr. Ramsay to Leslie Stephen, see John W. Bicknell's article, "Mr. Ramsay was Young Once," cited in the bibliography.)

3.Rosenman suggests this comparison when she notes that Woolf's first novel "is as autobiographical as To the Lighthouse" insofar as it deals with issues surrounding "Woolf's sense of self as a daughter and an artist" (23).

4.Eric Auerbach also asks this question (Who is looking at Mrs. Ramsay?) for a somewhat different purpose. In his 1953 article "The Brown Stocking" (excerpted from Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, 525-53), Auerbach focuses on the "multipersonal representation of consciousness," a technique Woolf uses, he claims, to achieve a closer approach to "objective reality." In my view, Woolf goes much further than this: she asks us to question the patriarchal notion of "objective reality" itself.

5.This crucial issue is similar to one Woolf deals with in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown": women as women are not represented in literature (see chapter one, above).

6.Many years earlier, Virginia Woolf argues along similar lines. As a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for changing the patriarchal coding of reality, Woolf begins to expose and examine the material practice, the everyday lives of real women. Zwerdling makes this point clearly:

> Woolf was acutely aware that even in literature the historical record was the product of the victors rather than the vanquished. She often voices her uneasiness about how little we know concerning the lives of the powerless. There had been a conspiracy of silence about them that Woolf set out to expose. . . . Woolf's dissatisfaction with novels for failing to provide a detailed record of a day in the life of a woman whose energy is spent in the home

> is righted in Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse and justified in her essay "Women and Fiction." (197)

Of course, the problem that remains is how to change the sexist coding. If reality itself is coded by the "victors," how can we learn anything about the lives of the "vanquished" from anything but the victors point of view? How can we see women's lives differently? Such questions inevitably lead us back to the role of the spectator.

7.Lily "re-views" Mrs. Ramsay: she studies the old view of Mrs. Ramsay and, in the process, constructs a new view of her; in other words, she sees Mrs. Ramsay again, differently.

8.The passage in the draft version recalls the garlanded heifer which is led to the sacrifical altar in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (11. 31-34). In Keats' poem, "happy, happy love" (a line echoed by Terrence at Rachel's death [VO,360-61]; cf. Bishop, 355-56) is frozen and ultimately sterile. Thus, for Lily, compliance with Mrs. Ramsay's matchmaking code can only lead to a kind of heterosexual union that is lifeless and sterile. I am grateful to E.L. Bishop for this observation.

9.The Panopticon, Doane notes, is a plan for a penitentiary. The authority, who is in the central tower, watches the prisoners, but the prisoners cannot see him. Thus, Foucault writes, the authority "sees everything without ever being seen." The prisoners, on the other hand, are "totally seen, without ever seeing"; they are never quite sure whether they are being looked at at any given time.

> Visibility is a trap. . . . He [the prisoner] is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never the subject of communication. . . . Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.

- Doane, 13, quoting Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 114-15.

10.Bankes' one-way gaze extends a shadow over Mrs. Ramsay, placing him in a position of power over her; similarly, Mr. Ramsay's mind shadows Mrs. Ramsay's. What kind of comment on her "triumph" does this shadow make? If she triumphs, Mrs. Ramsay certainly pays dearly for it.

11.In the published version of this passage, Woolf clearly underlines what she only hints at in the holograph draft (TL MS 195-97). In the draft, Mrs. Ramsay dreamily echoes one word; in the published text, she repeats Mr. Ramsay's entire sentence almost verbatim, and the repetition signifies her capitulation to his point of view: it will rain and she will not finish the stocking. When her thoughts take a turn her husband dislikes in the draft, Mr. Ramsay raises his hand; in the published text, this hand shadows Mrs. Ramsay's mind. As she revises, Woolf makes the link between Mrs. Ramsay's "triumph" and her self-suppression more explicit. See also Ruotolo, 128-29 and 126. Ruotolo writes of Mrs. Ramsay: "Even in the midst of disagreement and grievance--he has after all damned her--she submits to a reading that affirms 'the folly of women's minds.' Like the commander of Tennyson's light brigade--'some one had blundered'--hers is not to reason why."

12.As Claire Johnston notes, feminist films cannot simply reveal the "truth" of women's oppression. Feminist resistance necessarily involves construction as well. This new counter-construction is a resisting force that aims to counteract the original construction and call into question its "naturalness" or apparent inevitability. Johnston writes,

> It is important to point out that the workings of ideology do not involve a process of deception/intentionality. For Marx, ideology is a reality, it is not a lie . . . Clearly, if we accept the idea that cinema involves the production of signs, the idea of non-intervention is pure mystification. The sign is always a product. What the camera in fact grasps is the "natural" world of dominant ideology. Women's cinema cannot afford such idealism; the "truth" of our oppression cannot be "captured" on celluloid with the "innocence" of the camera: it has to be constructed/manufactured. New meanings have to be created by disrupting the fabric of the male bourgeois cinema within the text of the film. (quoted by de Lauretis, AD, 4)

Lily "disrupts" or calls into question the apparent inevitability of Bankes' view by adding her own, different "ray" to his.

13."There is also some evidence that Lily Briscoe's importance grew in Woolf's mind as she was writing the novel. Her preliminary notes and outlines do not suggest that such a person will figure in it prominently, ... And when Lily does appear in the first draft, she is a much more timid soul, at least in Part I" (Zwerdling, 199).

14.Lily's sense of frustration when she finds herself unable to merge with Mrs. Ramsay is particularly emphasized in the published text. In the holograph draft, her outburst, "Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing!" reads simply: "And it is not possible, she had decided" (TL MS, 91).

15.Mrs. Ramsay only calls the birds "Joseph" and "Mary" in the published version; in the draft, the birds are unnamed (TL MS, 130). The addition of the names strengthens the connection between Mrs. Ramsay and the Madonna (Joseph's wife Mary), whose only child is a son. Thus, with a minor revision of this passage, Woolf further severs the link between mother and daughter.

16.Lily's painting is also described in terms of a birth. "Other worshipful objects were content with worship," Lily notes; but "this other thing, this truth, this reality" required more work. She cannot worship Mrs. Ramsay the way Bankes does; but there is another truth, another reality. When she exchanges "the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting," for a few moments she becomes a naked, "unborn soul, a soul reft of body." These few moments are either "in her nature, or in her sex, she did not know which" (TL, 236-37).

17."She was wilful; she was commanding (of course, Lily reminded herself, I am thinking of her relations with women. . .). She opened bedroom windows. She shut doors. (So she tried to start the tune of Mrs. Ramsay in her head.)" Lily starts the tune of Mrs. Ramsay by thinking of Mrs. Ramsay's relations with women (cf. Rosenman, 100). The female tunes (the tune Lily starts and the one Mrs. McNab sings as she mirrors Mrs. Ramsay's gestures) are significant. Mrs. Ramsay herself hears her own tune mostly through her relationships with men. When she lets her thoughts wander to unpleasant aspects of her relationship with her husband, the tune becomes "two notes sounding together . . . with a dismal flatness." Immediately, "[a] shadow was on the page," and she turns her glance from the shadow, avoiding the thought of the two flat notes by generalizing it to "the inadequacy of human relationships" (TL, 62).

18.Mulvey states the problem thus: feminists are faced, she says, with . . .

> the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language (formed critically at the moment of arrival of language) while still caught within the language of patriarchy. There is no way we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to

> make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides . . .

This is precisely what, in Part I, Lily does (looking along Bankes' beam) and what, in Part II, Mrs. McNab helps Lily to do. In a passage just before the above quotation, Mulvey describes the paradox of phallocentrism which leads to this "ultimate challenge." The passage serves as an interesting gloss on Mrs. Ramsay's position in Part I, the position that Mrs. McNab helps Lily to shift:

> The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies . . . . Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning. (VP, 57-58)

Mrs. Ramsay becomes the silent image of woman holding her place as the bearer of meaning. With the help of Mrs. McNab, Lily strives to shift this position and carve a new place for a woman by becoming a female maker of meaning.

19.According to Gilbert, Lily's vision "is made possible by the intervention of those two tuneful, if elderly, muses Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast, who resurrect the Ramsay's summer house in 'rusty, laborious birth' . . . as they stoop, rise, groan, sing, slap and slam" (218).

20.The repetition of phrase "Chinese eyes" draws attention to eyes, sight, point of view, vision, the gaze, and so on. If Lily's eyes are "Chinese," they are not British, like the eyes of most people around her; the description serves to emphasize the point that Lily sees with different eyes, that her view is somehow different.

21.A comparison with the holograph draft suggest that in her revisions, Woolf wished to strengthen the daughters' gaze and the implicit link between the two daughters. In the manuscript version, the deliberate alternation between Lily gazing at the sea and Cam gazing at the shore does not occur.

22.See Ruotolo, 122-23 and 246-47, n. 10.

23.See Luce Irigaray, "The 'Mechanics' of Fluids," in This Sex Which is Not One for a discussion of the connection between women and fluidity. It would be impossible to sum up her "argument" simply, but a quotation may help:

> Fluid--like that other, inside/outside of philosophical discourse, is, by nature, unstable. Unless it is subordinated to geometrism or (?) idealized.
>
> Woman never speaks the same way. What she emits is flowing, fluctuating. Blurring. And she is not listened to, unless proper meaning (meaning of the proper) is lost. Whence the resistance to that voice that overflows the "subject." Which the "subject" then congeals, freezes, in its categories until it paralyzes the voice in its flow.
>
> "And there you have it, Gentlemen, that is why your daughters are dumb." Even if they chatter, proliferate pythically in works that only signify their aphasia, or the mimetic underside of your desire. And interpreting them where they exhibit only their muteness means subjecting them to a language that exiles them at an ever increasing distance from what perhaps they would have said to you, were already whispering to you. . . .
>
> Solid mechanics and rationality have maintained a relationship of very long standing, one against which fluids have never stopped arguing. (112-13)

It is no accident that the people who are united together at Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party "had a common cause against that fluidity out there" (T1, 147) or that Lily is excluded from this group.

24.I am using Saussure's terms very loosely here, applying them in the broadest sense. Thus, "synchronic" has to do with the analysis of a fixed system at a single point in time (for example, Mayoux's description of Mrs. Ramsay's "eternal" dinner table arrangement or Bankes' fixed view of Mrs. Ramsay); "diachronic," on the other hand, involves succession or change over time. "Paradigmatic" involves the associative or universal (the similarity between Mrs. Ramsay and the Madonna, for instance); "syntagmatic," on the other hand, involves proximity and context. For definitions of these terms, see, for instance, Aitchison, 17-18; Silverman, 4-14.

25.In 1908, Virginia Woolf records her reaction to a fresco by Perugino. At this early date, Woolf has already decided that she wants nonstatic art:

> I look at a fresco by Perugino. I conceive that he saw things grouped, contained in certain and invariable forms; expressed in faces, actions--[?which] did not exist; all beauty was contained in the momentary appearance of human beings. He saw it sealed as it were; all its worth in it; not a hint of fear or future. His fresco seems to me infinitely silent; as though beauty had swum up to the top and stayed there, above everything else, speech, paths leading on, relation of brain to brain, don't exist. . .
>
> As for writing--I want to express beauty too--but beauty (symmetry?) of life and the world, in action. Conflict?--is that it? If there is action in painting it is only to exhibit lines; but with the end of beauty in view. Isn't there a different kind of beauty? (Bell, i, 138)

Like Lily, Woolf is looking for a different kind of beauty, one that looks at "infinite discords, showing all the traces of the mind's passage through the world" (ibid.). For Woolf, beauty in motion is not the same as a static, frozen picture of beauty.

26.Rosenman expresses a similar idea (112).

27.Cam too becomes "a fountain of joy" when she holds her hand deep in the sea and imagines her own story of escape and adventure (TL, 280).

CHAPTER FOUR:

"TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY": THE NEW WORLD OF THE YEARS

> For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.[1]
>
> Audre Lorde

> But we cannot hear her mother's voice, or Hilda's voice; we can only hear Mr. Bennett's voice telling us facts about rents and freeholds and copyholds and fines. . . . Mr. Bennett . . . is trying to hypnotize us into the belief that, because he has made a house, there must be a person living there. . . . And so they have developed a technique of novel-writing which suits their purpose; they have made tools and established conventions which do their business. But those tools are not our tools and that business is not our business. For us those conventions are ruin, those tools are death . . .
>
> And so the smashing and the crashing began.[2]
>
> Virginia Woolf

In the two novels discussed above, Woolf begins to topple the house--the "very substantial house" in which Mrs. Brown has lived so long--to the ground. In Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out, the male-defined process of "becoming a woman" and the search for a mother to provide a female image are explored. In To the Lighthouse, the artist-daughter (Lily/Woolf herself) looks at the painful conflicts and contradictions involved in a mother-and-daughter

relationship. Lily's gaze provides us with a kind of female image of Mrs. Ramsay. But in the context of a patriarchal society, this image is necessarily based on a kind of paradox or impossibility: Lily is caught between her desire for unity with Mrs. Ramsay and her need to repudiate the patriarchal values Mrs. Ramsay supports.

In The Years, the last of Woolf's novels published in her lifetime, Woolf continues this toppling process. This time, however, she focuses more explicitly on the complex and difficult process of reconstruction. What happens, Woolf asks in the first version of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," when we no longer believe what we are told about Mrs. Brown? According to Woolf, the old woman's solidity disappears; her features crumble; and her house "topples to the ground." But the process cannot stop there. From "the ruins and splinters of this tumbled mansion," Woolf adds, "the novelist must somehow construct a habitable dwelling place" (B1, 272-73). In The Years, Woolf begins to construct a new dwelling place for Mrs. Brown.

The project is not an easy one, however. On April 25, 1933, Woolf describes her plan for The Years in her diary. The difficulty of constructing this new "house" is reflected in her ambitious plan for The Years:

> I must be bold and adventurous. I want to give the whole of the present society - nothing less: facts as well as the vision. And to combine them both. (AWD, 192)

Reconstruction involves a combination of material and spiritual, private and public, fact and vision--the whole of present society. A few lines down in the same entry, she elaborates:

> It should aim at immense breadth and immense intensity. It should include satire, comedy, poetry, narrative . . . . And it's to end with the press of daily normal life continuing. And there are to be millions of ideas but no preaching -- history, politics, feminism, art, literature -- in short a summing up of all I know, feel, laugh at, despise, like, admire, hate and so on. (ibid.)

Woolf wanted to avoid "preaching" or didacticism. At the same time, this new novel was to include "millions of ideas" ranging from feminism to pacifism, from family structure and "ordinary people" to revisionary history and a new view of "here and now." As Woolf notes in her diary near the end of 1932, The Years, was "to take in everything, sex, education,life etc." (AWD, 184).

According to Grace Radin, by the time The Years was published, "Woolf's original intentions lost their force." Many ideas are suggested in the published novel, Radin notes, but the expression of these ideas "is often indirect or incomplete."[3] Thus, for Radin, Woolf left her original intentions behind during the process of revision; instead, she simply "incorporated" the ideas she deleted from The Years "in the pamphlet Three Guineas" (xvii).

But if we look at The Years differently, keeping in mind Woolf's desire to make room for Mrs. Brown, we arrive, I think, at a different conclusion. There is another way to look at both Woolf's process of revision and the subsequent connection between The Years and Three Guineas. Woolf did not say that Three Guineas was to provide a convenient place for ideas she deleted from--and thus were no longer present in--The Years; rather, as she wrote in a letter to Vita Sackville-West on June 1, 1938, Three Guineas "repeats . . . the theme of . . . The Years" (L, vi, #3391). The two books are about precisely the same thing. According to Woolf's diary entry a couple of days later, in fact, Woolf saw the two works "as one book" (AWD, 281). In many ways, The Years and Three Guineas are not simply complementary, the second providing the ideas that are missing from the first; rather, in Woolf's view, they are the "same" book.

In this chapter, I take a look at Woolf's process of revision: What were the original "ideas" in the book? did Woolf really delete these ideas, and if so, why did she make the deletions she made? How do these ideas (and their "deletion") relate to Mrs. Brown? I also examine the critical history of The Years in the context of making room for Mrs. Brown: If The Years did not fail, what was Woolf trying to accomplish? How is this book, to borrow Quentin Bell's terms, "something different"? How does this book

begin to construct a "habitable dwelling place" for Mrs. Brown?

"Professions for Women":
Mr. Bennett and the death of the Angel . . .

Woolf struggled a long time with The Years: although the novel was not published until March of 1937, Woolf records her first idea for the new book over six years earlier: "I have this moment, while having my bath, conceived an entire new book." she writes. Inspired by a talk she planned to give to a feminist society the following night,[4] Woolf decided to write "a sequel to A Room of One's Own--about the sexual life of women" (AWD, 162). Thus, The Years begins with the problem Rachel Vinrace faces (as she goes through her first sexual experiences and encounters a male definition of herself in the process of "becoming a woman"), the problem Woolf hints at in the published version of "Professions for Women" when she kills the Angel in the House:

> The Angel was dead; what then remained? You may say that what remained was . . . a young woman . . . [T]hat young woman had only to be herself. Ah, but what is 'herself'? I mean, what is a woman? I assure you I do not know.
> (E, ii, 286-8)

Woolf's "Speech of January 21, 1931" was the inspiration for The Years; it is also essentially a draft version of "Professions for Women." In the "Speech" version, a passage

almost identical to the one quoted above is included (TP, xxxiii). Thus, The Years begins with a question, a question related to the problem of the Mrs. Brown, the little old woman sitting in the corner of the railway carriage: "what is a woman?" Woolf asks again in 1931, in the essay that inspired The Years.

In an earlier, angrier version of this essay, published as an Appendix to The Pargiters, the Angel who hovers over the woman writer has not yet made her appearance. Instead, Woolf complains of a set of ready-made values and the problem of how to "find a sentence that could hold its own against the male flood." Using the example of "war books," she notes that it is

> extremely difficult to say what you think--and make money. For instance, about the war. if I were reviewing books now, I would say this was a stupid and violent and hateful and idiotic and trifling and ignoble and mean display. I would say I am bored to death by war books. I detest the masculine point of view. (TP, 164)

In the later "Speech" version, the example of the "war books" that the woman journalist must review is changed to "a book that has been written by a man--one Mr. Arnold Bennett" (TP, xxxi). The change suggests some kind of connection in Woolf's mind linking war or war books with Arnold Bennett's novels and novels, in turn, with a kind of man-made fantasy woman (E, ii, 285): in the "Speech" version, both Arnold

Bennett and the Angel in the House first appear. She is simply a phantom in "Professions for Women." But in the earlier version, Woolf holds men responsible for her existence: the Angel in the House is, Woolf says, "the woman that men wished women to be" (TP, xxix-xxx).[5]

"What is a woman?":
Grandmothers, love and money in The Pargiters . . .

As Woolf progressed with her work, writing and rewriting and, in the last few years, condensing and compressing, The Years underwent several major changes in form. what began as a longer version of the essay "Professions for Women" grew into an essay-novel. The essay-novel portion of The Years, published as The Pargiters in 1977, consists of five chapters and six "interchapters" or essays. Woolf wrote this draft very quickly, "far ahead of Orlando or The Lighthouse" by her own estimation (AWD, 184-85): The Pargiters is essentially the product of two months' work, from mid-October to mid-December, 1932 (see TP, 5, 150). After completing a draft that corresponds roughly with the "1880" section of the novel in this new form, Woolf abandoned the essay-novel experiment and turned to what seems to be--and I underline "seems"--a more conventional novel form.

In The Pargiters, Radin notes, Woolf serves as her own interpreter; the new essay-novel form combines "story-telling with analysis that is explicitly ideological and didactic"

(15). According to Charles Hoffman, "Nowhere else . . . does Virginia Woolf analyze and comment on the characters to the extent that she does in these first two notebooks of The Years."[6] Woolf's analysis and comment on her own writing in The Pargiters has been of some interest to scholars recently. Radin writes:

> For many years studies of Woolf have emphasized the aesthetic and psychological values of her works and have placed her, for better or worse, among the novelists of "sensibility." Scant attention has been paid to her social theories, perhaps because they cluster around feminism, a point of view that has only recently been restored to serious consideration. For this reason The Years and its documents are at the heart of the current reappraisal of Woolf, since it is in these uncut documents that her social and political theories are developed most fully. (xxii-xxiii)

In the first essay of The Pargiters, modelled on the speech given to the Women's Service League in 1931, Woolf claims that women earning their livings professionally "are doing work of enormous importance." To support this claim, she notes that it is necessary to look at women's lives in historical perspective: we must forget ourselves for the moment and become, Woolf writes, "the people we were two or three generations ago" (TP, 8). Thus, in the first chapter, Woolf turns to a fictional look at "our great grandmothers," the Pargiter women of 1880.

Woolf draws conclusions about "our grandmothers" in the second essay: the Pargiter women were young and healthy, she

notes, but they had nothing to do: since their father thought that "a girl's place was the home" (Bennett's home?), and since his money was tied up with the education of his sons, the daughters could not go to college (TP, 28). Woolf's interpretations are quite specific: Delia's cry when she saw the woman pushing a perambulator outside, for instance, has to do with her ambition to be a violinist: she exclaimed "'Oh my God,' as the thought struck her that she would never be allowed to go to Germany and study music," Woolf explains (TP, 36). Lack of money for education and the necessity of full-time motherhood enforced by society--as Rachel in The Voyage Out feared--would keep Delia from realising her ambitions.

After discussing the effects of "money," Woolf looks at the influence of "street love," using Rose's sexual assault on her way to Lamley's toy store as her fictional illustration. In the third essay, Woolf analyses the fictional scene, describing Rose's feelings of guilt and her impulse to lie about the frightening experience (TP, 51). Since Rose's brother experiences a different kind of street love, street love causes a division between the sexes: Rose, who used to be close to Bobby, now "felt some fear or dislike for her brother because of his sex"; and Bobby, "exasperated by her silence, called her every abusive name he could think of," although his life at school was unnatural and unhappy as well (TP, 54-56). If they could just talk to each other

about their experiences, Woolf explains, things would be different: instead of being "members of opposite camps," they would have "combined togther [sic] in blood brotherhood" (TP, 56).

Woolf's analysis of the sociological and psychological effects of Rose's sexual assault is certainly interesting. Nevertheless, the reason Woolf abandoned the essay-novel form is, I think, fairly clear. One of the problems with this new form is that The Pargiters becomes very didactic--something Woolf expressly wanted to avoid. Moreover, the intrusive voice of the author in the essays makes the fictional chapters seem less dramatic: the fictional scenes are only there to teach a lesson. Finally, the essays themselves become less persuasive, since Woolf "tells" rather than "shows"; she does not allow her reader the freedom to come up with her or his own conclusions. In The Years, Woolf wanted to include "millions of ideas but no preaching."[7] Although the essay-novel was perhaps a good place to start, it seems impossible to avoid didacticism using this form. Appropriately enough, after about two months of writing the essay-novel, Woolf decided to abandon this new form. Instead, she turned to what many critics have seen as a return to a more traditional novel form.

The Years: "something different" . . .

Although Woolf abandoned the interchapters by "compacting them in the text" early in 1933 (AWD, 190), she did not immediately abandon the pace. A year and a half later, on September 30, 1934, having just written the last words of the first draft, she noted that The Years was "written at a greater gallop than any of my books" (AWD, 217). The next day, however, rather ominously, "the sharp, the very sharp pain over my eyes" returned (AWD, 218). Woolf began the long and tedious grind of revision, a process that brought her "acute despair" and worries of "complete failure" (AWD, 255). After the first draft was completed, it would be another two and a half years before The Years would be ready for publication.[8]

While finishing the draft and during the long struggle to revise, Woolf describes the book in various letters to friends as "pretty bad," "interminable," "corpulent and most obstinate," "wholly worthless," "hopeless," "verbose, foolish, all about hollow reeds," "a tough old serpent," "a snake."[9] Although Woolf often doubted her own work, her very negative evaluation of The Years is nevertheless striking. There was something especially difficult about this work. As Nigel Nicholson notes, "the writing of The Years became a torment" (xi). In June, 1936, referring to a period Leonard Woolf calls "an unending nightmare" (153), Virginia Woolf records in her diary that she had suffered "two months dismal and worse, almost catastrophic illness--never been so near

the precipice to my own feeling since 1913" (AWD, 257). The Years brought her closer to suicide than she had been for over twenty years. So why was this book such a struggle?

Noting that Leonard's and Virginia's doubts about The Years brought Woolf to the verge of collapse, Quentin Bell comments: "All her novels were a cause of anxiety and depression, but this one was by its very nature particularly shattering to her nerves." This novel, he claims, "was something different," "a step in another direction" (Bell, ii, 195). As Bell's comment suggests, Woolf's struggle with The Years was somehow connected with a distinct shift in her writing. Although it may appear as though Woolf moved from a more radical work in a new form (the essay novel The Pargiters) to a more conventional novel (The Years), such an analysis is superficial.[10] As Grace Radin comments,

> . . . almost from the beginning, and certainly from the introduction of Elvira [Sara in the published version], Woolf's conception of the novel was at variance with the naturalist tradition to which many of its early readers thought it belonged. (127)

The Years is "something different." The published novel is not as conventional as it may seem.

Other critics have noted the shift that Bell describes. "The Years marks an unmistakable break in Virginia Woolf's novels," Josephine O'Brien Schaefer writes in 1966 (130). The title of Schaefer's article--"The Vision Falters: The

Years, 1937"--clearly reflects her negative view of this shift. Like Schaefer and Guiguet, many critics seem to see The Years as a step in the wrong direction. Leonard Woolf, for instance, calls the novel "the worst book she ever wrote" (Downhill, 145; 155). Wilde notes that the "Virginia Woolf Issue" of the Bulletin of the New York Public Library 80 (Winter 1977) marks "a significant change in attitudes toward the novel, which has frequently been ignored in recent critical studies of Woolf." Prior to 1977, evaluations of the novel, he says, are "generally negative" (162).

Although most of the earliest reviews of The Years were fairly positive, some were not: Edwin Muir, a consistent admirer of Woolf's previous work, saw The Years as "a disappointing book," a step backwards after The Waves; Scott James likewise judged the book severely (Majumdar, 386, 388; Guiguet, 318). In 1975, Majumdar easily dismisses The Years, calling it a "traditional novel, a family saga," "a typical bestseller": although popular when first published, he notes, The Years is now (and rightfully so, his tone suggests) "neglected and very much less popular both with critics and the buying public" (27).

Why The Years "failed," Part One:
"Ugliness without corresponds with ugliness within" . . .

One central complaint about The Years has to do with the apparent bleakness, hopelessness or futility of its vision.

Bernard Blackstone, for instance, sees the novel as a kind of ugly parody, the "obverse" of all Woolf's previous novels (198). For Blackstone, it seems, The Years is set up much like, say, an old Western movie: "the battalions of good and evil are more sharply defined than ever before," he claims. "On the one hand," we have "the forces of society" (the bad guys) which Blackstone sees as more or less evil and corrupt: "Underneath the shows of society corruption is everywhere," he says (199); "the theme is the power of society to thwart and crush" (205). "On the other hand," he writes, there is "the individual" (the good guys), "struggling against servitude." "The bird is caught in the cage and cannot sing."[11] Blackstone has certainly simplified the picture; but he does not explain why, for instance, there is apparently so little connection or interaction between the two forces. His conclusion? "The symbolism is almost too evident, the contrast," not surprisingly, given his dualistic framework, "too clearly drawn." "Virginia Woolf is feeling the futility and the injustice too acutely," he writes, "and her novel in consequence lacks the detachment of great art" (198-99).[12]

For Jacqueline O'Brien Schaefer, "the over-all impression" of the novel "is one of drabness, and futility"; "the reader is oppressed by the mediocrity and dullness of this world" (135). Schaefer attributes the "emotional poverty" of The Years to the "poverty" of Virginia Woolf's own life in the 1930's. "The years 1932-34 were full of

death for Virginia Woolf," Schaefer notes, citing the deaths of Lytton Strachey, Dora Carrington, Roger Fry and others. These deaths "cast a shadow over The Years," she says. For Schaefer, the death of friends apparently leads to a lament for a world that has passed:

> The years that follow 1913 lead to the Great War, to the destruction of a generation. After that, of course, the whole world is different. The entire social structure, the values, standards, conventions have altered. In a very real sense, a world has died. (136-37)[13]

Thus, according to Schaefer, the novel is filled with a sense of nostalgia for nineteenth and early twentieth century society.[14] Like Blackstone, Schaefer concludes that The Years involves "a parody, a belittlement of the great moments of stasis in her preceding novels" (141).[15] The world in this novel, she says, is "empty and ugly," and The Years simply "gives a picture of the futility, poverty, drabness of human life." According to Schaefer, "The Years fails to achieve" its goal, for "Hamlet's cry, 'And smelt so? Pah!' has replaced the vision" (131; 143-44).

One of the reasons for the "emptiness" and "ugliness" of The Years, it seems, is its lack of center. The scenes are detached and there are "no climaxes," Blackstone complains.[16] He continues:

> No particular scene grips us, to open a window on life. There is no heightening of the understanding. Where shall we find a central motif around which to group these detached

> situations? Nowhere: or if at all, only in that initial shock of horror, that trauma . . . . (202)

If Blackstone cannot find a central motif, Deborah Newton is upset by the lack of a central character. "The characters," she judges, echoing Bennett's indictment of Woolf's novels many years earlier, "are not really well portrayed" (54). "Even Eleanor remains more or less unknown." The thought of Eleanor apparently leads Newton to her most serious charge:

> No single person seems more important than the others, and partly because of this the book lacks continuity; there is no central core at which to grasp; one year is very like another. (55)

Ultimately, this charge leads Newton to a conclusion that is, by now, familiar: "At the end, as at the beginning, there is a curious feeling of hopelessness," she writes. "Gone is the early rapture, and the dreams will never be fulfilled. Life is ephemeral, unimportant, and time consumes it all" (56).

A critical "shift" . . .

"This issue of the Bulletin is a landmark in Virginia Woolf studies," Marcus writes in her introduction to the "Virginia Woolf Issue" of 1977. "The papers presented here," she notes, "mark the beginning of a critical revaluation of The Years long overdue; some of them affirm it is a great novel . . ." ("Reappraisal," 137).[17] So what makes the novel

"great" in these papers? And how great a critical shift does this issue, in fact, represent?

In his contribution to this issue, Leaska points out that critics have tended to place too much emphasis on the "ugly and sordid details" of the novel ("the blob of spittle, the noseless face of the flower vendor"). Having said this, however, he proceeeds to undercut his own statement by placing the emphasis himself on Woolf's "desert of despair": the only "gigantic creative energy" that Leaska sees in The Years is that which captures "the fierce, hopeless, unrelenting sense of life diminishing" (209-10). Like Schaefer earlier, Leaska emphasizes the "ever-increasing scroll of obituaries" that "depleted" Woolf's life in the 1930's (208-10).

In her diary entry of March 7, 1937, eight days before its publication, Woolf writes of The Years: "that I myself know why it's a failure, and that its failure was deliberate" (AWD, 265). Leaska attributes this statement to a kind of masochism: Woolf's words imply, he claims, "an overwhelming need to be punished"; "all her suffering loomed up before her in the Present and became transformed in her mind as punishment for the Past" (210). A few lines down in her diary, Woolf adds: "I have reached my point of view, as writer, as being." For Leaska, there is little or no sense of triumph or achievement in this statement. His reading is quite fatalistic: while ghosts "continued to moan and groan"

in The Years, Woolf endured the "torment" of feeling "purged of her creative powers." And although he says "she was wrong," Leaska's final statement--"we know that Virginia Woolf would not be alive to see the publication of the last of her novels"--suggests that, in his view, her statement about loss of creativity was not far off the mark.

Victoria S. Middleton centers her article "The Years: 'A Deliberate Failure'" around the diary entry Leaska quotes above. Unlike Leaska, Middleton does affirm that Woolf "was right to insist that The Years is not 'a tired book, a last effort'" (161; AWD, 264). Nevertheless, she too sees The Years as a bleak novel, a novel of hopelessness and entrapment:

> Eleanor's last words--"and now?"--denote expectancy; but the repetition, echoing her earlier question "and then?" practically answers her. We know what to expect from the future, for the novel has shown us that this cycle of lives will simply repeat itself. The feeling of entrapment in an inexorable process which has neither outlet nor end is our final experience of the novel. (169-70)

The literal dawn that Eleanor sees at the end of The Years, Middleton goes on to explain, "has the effect of a pun"; and thus, a dissatisfaction with this climax--she uses Schaefer's article as her example--is "appropriate" (169). For Middleton, the passage describing the "extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace" of the dawn is simply an ironic comment: the serenity of the scene, she claims, is simply

Woolf "parodying her own fictional endings, those great moments of fulfillment at the end of Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse" (170; see also n.15 above).

Why The Years "failed," Part Two:
"a moment when her courage failed" . . .

Ten years after the "Virginia Woolf Issue," Marcus states that the most important work to come out of this issue was Grace Radin's edition of "Two Enormous Chunks" and subsequently her book-length study of the manuscripts (Patriarchy xiii). In the latter, Radin's method is to "follow certain trends" in Woolf's process of revision, carefully documenting changes "that significantly alter form and meaning." According to Radin, one of the most notable trends in the process of revision is "the deletion of sexual and ideological material" (xxiv). Delia's unhappiness in the 1880 chapter, for instance, seems "vague and baseless" (to use Radin's terms) in the published version; in both the manuscript and the galley proofs, however, her unhappiness is connected with her ambition to be a violinist. Thus, "in this as in many other instances," Radin writes, "a pointed social comment in the holograph is reduced to a more casual reference in the galley proofs, and is either eliminated altogether or obscured further in The Years (118).

Throughout her study, Radin gives us innumerable examples of such deletions: In the published version of the

text, for example, Martin tells Maggie in the "1914" chapter that he and Sara had talked of "[t]he whole world . . . . Politics; religion; morality"; in the holograph version, they actually have this conversation (58). As Radin notes in her 1977 article, two enormous antiwar chunks were cut from the novel just before it was published.[18] "When the first draft is compared with the published novel," Radin concludes, "one becomes aware of the extent to which feminist, pacifist, and sexual themes have been deleted, obscured, or attenuated" (148).

One big change in The Years has to do with the depiction of Rose's sexuality. Rose's "sexual nature is barely touched on, aside from the account of her childhood trauma," Radin writes. All references to Rose's lesbianism, for instance, are deleted or obscured (119). One of the major points Woolf makes in "Professions for Women" is that it is difficult for women to tell the truth about their bodies, since "[m]en . . . would be shocked" (E, ii, 287-88). Referring to Rose, Radin comments: "Although Woolf apparently felt free to present Nicholas, an overt homosexual, as a sympathetic character, she seems more constrained when dealing with female homosexuality" (119). Thus the fisherwoman's line becomes snagged when she approaches some truth about a woman's body; in her revisions of the text, consciously or unconsciously, Woolf apparently becomes her own example of internal policing.

Of course, not all of Woolf's revisons have to do with internal policing. So why did Woolf delete the most explicit sexual and political passages? Was it because, as Grace Radin claims, there came "a moment" some time between The Pargiters and the two published works, The Years and Three Guineas, "a moment when her courage failed"? So that, in Radin's terms, Woolf shifted "from an explicitly political novel to a gentler study of manners and relationships through the years"? Or is there some other explanation? Perhaps there is more to the story; perhaps something else was at stake.

In any case, it is clear that Radin laments the changes she describes. A passage in the introduction to her study suggests her preference for the explicit politics of the drafts over the "muted" published version of The Years:

> As I have read my way through the manuscripts, . . . I have been led to wonder whether another unwritten novel lies hidden in these scratched-out passages and cancelled galley proofs. If she had stopped revising sooner, or if her work had gone on for another year, what book would we be reading today as the last novel published in her lifetime? (xviii)

The wistful tone suggests that Radin would have preferred the "unwritten novel" to the written one. Moreover, she is not the only critic to have voiced such a preference. Susan Squier, who has also written on earlier versions of The Years, claims that the published version "takes a resigned,

rather than a combative tone." Continuing the military metaphor, she adds that the original draft "at least suggests the possibility of a more forceful response to women's oppression."[19] According to Squier, "the feminist civilization to come" is "rather carefully explored in the original version"; in the published version, however, Woolf merely focuses on "an indictment of the masculine society of the present--for which there seems to be no alternative" ("Track," 226). Although Susan Squier believes we should understand Woolf's revisions, like Radin, she does not seem to approve of them: Woolf's "characteristic pattern of revising away from direct denunciation of social ills to a more indirect dramatization of them," is, according to Squier, "a pattern that we may lament" (London, 153).

"To live differently": The New World of The Years . . .

In "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf makes her now famous statement: "in or about December, 1910, human character changed" (B2, 320). In a passage which is less often quoted, Woolf elaborates on this statement. She connects this change in human nature with a change in social relationships, particularly relationships involving differences of class and gender. For Woolf, this social change is both reflected in and, at the same time, produced by, a change in literature, politics, and critical interpretation:

> In life one can see this change, if I may use a homely illustration, in the character of one's cook . . . . Do you ask for more solemn instances of the power of the human race to change? Read the Agamemnon, and see whether, in process of time, your sympathies are not almost entirely with Clytemnestra. Or consider the married life of the Carlyles and bewail the waste, the futility, for him and for her, of the horrible domestic tradition which made it seemly for a woman of genius to spend her time chasing beetles, scouring saucepans, instead of writing books. All human relationships have shifted--those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature. (B2, 320-21)

The passage about the change in human character appears just before the story of Mrs. Brown's encounter with Mr. Bennett in the railway carriage. This change in human character, Mrs. Brown's railway experience, and the search for a new "house" for Mrs. Brown as Woolf describes them in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" are inscribed/woven into the "1910" and "1911" sections of The Years.

In The Years, however, there is a difference: like To the Lighthouse, The Years portrays Mrs. Brown not just as a single woman, but rather as a community of women; unlike this earlier novel, however, The Years has no central figure, no "Mrs. Ramsay" around which the other characters revolve. In this respect, The Years resembles a different literary tradition, a tradition that Sandra A. Zagarell has called the "narrative of community." Works in this tradition, Zagarell

explains,

> take as their subject the life of a community (life in "its everyday aspects") and portray the minute and quite ordinary processes through which the community maintains itself as an entity. The self exists here as part of the interdependent network of the community rather than as an individualistic unit. (499)[20]

Although Eleanor is, as I will discuss shortly, the woman on the train in the "1911" section of The Years, she is not (as the complaints of several critics attest) the "central character."[21] Woolf connects Eleanor's story with the stories of other women in the novel, and it is the interdependent network of their lives that changes through the course of "the years."

"1910" . . .

In "1910," Maggie looks across the street at a prison-like factory, a "palace of glass with thin black bars across it" (TY, 147). (Is this the mirroring glass prison of the Edwardian age, the looking glass that defines Mrs. Brown?) A few pages earlier, Sara looks out the same window and sees a brawl by the public house. She turns to look at herself; but in the yellow glare of the public house lamp, her image is hideous and distorted:

> her face in the mixed light looked cadaverous and worn, as if she were no longer a girl, but an old woman worn out by a life of childbirth, debauchery and crime. She stood there hunched

> up, with her hands clenched together. (TY, 145)

The yellow light, which is linked to both the public house brawl and the factory/prison, makes Sara look like an old woman, an old, worn-out woman like the one Rachel Vinrace fears she will become in The Voyage Out. In the mixed light before the King's death, the world itself has become hideous and distorted to Sara:

> "In time to come," she said, looking at her sister, "people, looking into this room--this cave, this little antre, scooped out of mud and dung, will hold their fingers to their noses"--she held her fingers to her nose--"and say "Pah! They stink!" (ibid.)

Thus the images of the worn-out old woman and the cave of mud and dung in which she lives are connected with a group of people or a society that literally "stinks."[22] With the inclusion of such hideous images, it is not difficult to understand why The Years is often regarded, as Radin puts it, as Virginia Woolf's "darkest novel" ("Two," 227). If we maintain that the novel's vision is simply of darkness and gloom, however, the passage that follows Sara's outburst becomes very difficult to explain: "The night was full of roaring and cursing; of violence and unrest, also of beauty and joy" (TY, 146). If there is no hope, why does Woolf include "beauty and joy"? Is the statement simply ironic, or is there some other explanation?[23]

Although the cave is filled with mud and dung, it also, it seems, leaves room for hope. The possibility of change is suggested by the last passages of "1910," the passages following Sara's statement and the description of the night. In The Voyage Out, Rachel indirectly traces the woman's worn look to motherhood. Following Sara's hideous image of herself and the curiously mixed but definitely hopeful passage "of beauty and joy" in the "1910" section of The Years, Sara and Maggie briefly discuss children. The two sisters hint at the possibility of having children differently, questioning the dogma of obligatory motherhood that traps Rachel:

> "Bring up your children on a desert island where the ships only come when the moon's full!" she exclaimed.
> "Or have none?" said Maggie. (TL, 146)

As if the conversation brought some kind of light or illumination, immediately following Maggie's words, "A window was thrown open" (ibid.) When the window is opened in To the Lighthouse, Lily sees a vision of Mrs. Ramsay. In The Years, however, we remain firmly in the "real" world: through the open window, Maggie and Sara only hear a woman "shrieking abuse at" her drunken husband.[24] Maggie crosses the room to shut the window, and looks out. She sees the prison/factory bathed in sickly yellow light and hears someone crying hoarsely from below. The section then closes with the

shouted announcement: "The King's dead!" (TY, 145-47). The death of King Edward VII in "1910"--the year that human character changed--signifies the symbolic death of the Edwardian era which was dominated, Woolf notes in her famous essay, by Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy.

"1911" . . .

After the death of King Edward VII in "1910," the "1911" section opens with the sun slowly rising. It rises over different glass-like buildings, the "glass roofs of the great railway stations." The trains rush off in different directions. Like Mrs. Brown in Woolf's essay, one of the Pargiter women in The Years is sitting in a railway carriage: the middle-aged Eleanor is travelling by train to visit her brother Morris at his mother-in-law's house.

When she finally arrives at old Mrs. Chinnery's, Eleanor realises that 1911 is a special year:

> This year it was different. This year everything was different. Her father was dead; her house was shut up; she had no attachment at the moment anywhere. (TY, 150)

Like Mrs. Brown, Eleanor has lost her "father," her old house, her old attachments. She has become a kind of free agent, an undefined, homeless "will-o-the-wisp" whose new house will define, to great extent, who she will be:

> What shall I do now? Live there? she asked herself, as she passed a very respectable

> Georgian villa in the middle of a street. No, not in a village she said to herself. . . What about that house then, she said to herself, looking at a house with a verandah among some trees. But then she thought, I should turn into a grey-haired lady cutting flowers with a pair of scissors and tapping at cottage doors. She did not want to tap at cottage doors. (TY, 150)

After unpacking her things in her room, like Mrs. McNab in To the Lighthouse, Eleanor stands in front of the looking-glass. As if for the first time in her life, Eleanor looks at "the woman who had been for fifty-five years so familiar that she no longer saw her"--herself.[25] She realises she is getting old (TY, 153). But she also realises that she is different, quite different, from what people made out:

> But now I'm labelled, she thought--an old maid who washes and watches birds. That's what they think I am. But I'm not--I'm not in the least like that, she said. She shook her head and turned away from the glass. (TY, 156)

When she turns from the glass, she turns to look for her own glasses, her own vision which she seems to have lost (ibid.).

Eleanor's false "old maid" label is linked to a moment in the railway carriage, a moment when she lost her vision. Thirty years earlier, Eleanor "shaded" her eyes and hid her face behind a newspaper in the corner of a railway carriage:

> An old maid who washes and watches birds, she said to herself as she looked in the glass. There were her eyes--they still seemed to her rather bright, in spite of the lines round them--the eyes she had shaded in the railway

> carriage because Dubbin praised them. But now I'm labelled, she thought . . . (ibid.)

Dubbin, who is still telling a story about himself in 1911--"his voice boomed out. He wanted an audience"--praised Eleanor's eyes years ago, so she hid them "to conceal her pleasure." Now she is labelled (TY, 155-56, 163). In To the Lighthouse, we recall Mrs. Ramsay accepts the praise implied by Mr. Bankes' rapture. Lily, however, will not become the object of his gaze; she will not surrender her own vision. In The Years, Eleanor recalls hiding her face from the other passengers in the railway carriage; in the process, however, her own eyes were "shaded," her own vision was blocked.

That, Eleanor recalls, was thirty years earlier. In 1910, Sara looks like an old woman in a muddy, stinking cave; but in 1911, Eleanor notes, "everything was different." Eleanor's father is dead, she no longer has any attachments, and she is looking for a new house. No one would praise her eyes anymore (TY, 153). After looking in the mirror, she finds her glasses and adjusts the focus three times (TY, 157). The first thing she sees is a white owl whose significance Comstock explores in her 1977 article (263ff.): according to Comstock, the white owl "brings with it echoes of a halting, broken, collective search for Truth, like that carried on, for example, by Eleanor and Nicholas" (267).[26] After Eleanor sees the owl and "the point of a star," she notes that Peggy, the young girl who will eventually become

a doctor, refuses to follow in her mother's footsteps. Peggy's mother and grandmother call her; but the young woman who will enter the professions "did not look in the least sleepy"; she "did not mean to go to bed, Eleanor felt sure" (TY, 160-52).

Eleanor herself returns to her room, listens to the trees rustling, and stretches out in bed to read Dante (she has found her glasses, after all). Feeling "as if things were moving past her," as if she were still in the railway carriage, she notes that "it's not the landscape any longer"; rather, "it's people's lives, their changing lives" (TY, 162). She reads two lines from Dante:

> For by so many more there are who say "ours"
> So much the more of good doth each possess.
> (TY, 163)

According to Margaret Comstock, the lines indicate Eleanor's interest in spiritual wealth "which can be shared without diminishing" rather than material wealth, "of which one increases his share at the expense of another." Thus, Comstock concludes that in "1911,"

> Eleanor leaves behind "the gentlemen and their politics," their exclusionary talk, and their peacock umbrellas [Dubbin's story about himself], in favor of a white owl and a scrap of Dante: an embracing, gathering ascent toward truth that ends in a vision of shared possession.

Eleanor is working toward a vision of sharing and co-operation, a vision which, in Comstock's terms, "seems to take on a reality in social life" later in the novel (268-69).

"1907" . . .

Four years before Eleanor reads Dante's Purgatorio, her cousin Sara lies in bed reading Sophocles' Antigone. Noting that the two scenes are closely linked,[27] Leaska suggests that there is a kind of spiritual connection between Eleanor and Sara. According to Leaska, Virginia Woolf was confusing Sara (or Elvira in the draft version) with Eleanor: "Woolf saw Elvira and Eleanor as two parts of the same person--herself!" ("Pargiter," 203).[28] Both Eleanor and Sara are crippled: in The Years, "we are forced to the conclusion that to exist in a male-dominated world, the female must somehow be subordinated--or crushed." Thus, Sara is physically crippled; but Eleanor, Leaska claims, "has been dealt a fate worse that Sara's: since Mrs. Pargiter's death leaves Eleanor alone with a possessive and indulgent father, Woolf "has in effect buried Eleanor--like Antigone--alive" (204).[29] Of course, four years later, we recall, "everything has changed": the father (Captain Pargiter) is dead; and the daughter (Eleanor) is glancing in the mirror, finding her glasses, seeing white owls and stars, reading Dante, and searching for a new house.

In The Years, the glass is a triple pun: it is a looking-glass that Eleanor glances into; the eyeglass that Eleanor searches for; and the sharp-edged glass that shatters and cuts. In "1907," Sara links Antigone with a piece of broken glass. While lying in bed, she looks out the window and sees a couple sitting out in the garden. The man picks up a gleaming object which is, Sara imagines the man saying, "my broken heart, this broken glass":

> She watched them. They went into the ballroom. "And suppose in the middle of the dance," she murmured, "she takes it out; and looks at it and says, "what is this?" and it's only a piece of broken glass--of broken glass. . . . " She looked down at the book again.
>
> "The Antigone of Sophocles," she read.
>
> (TY, 104)

Antigone is buried alive, and her fate is connected with another story through a piece of broken glass: the story of traditional, romantic, heterosexual love.

"1908"/"1880" . . .

If the broken glass in "1907" looks forward to Eleanor's search for her glasses in "1911," it also anticipates another scene: Rose's description of her attempted suicide. Martin recalls a scene from his childhood: Rose "wanted him to do something" (TY, 123), to come with her to Lamley's since Eleanor told her not to go alone (TY, 15-16). A knife (TY, 32-33, 122), a quarrel over Miss Pym's cats (TY, 16, 33,

123), and a reference to Pargiter's horse (TY 23, 121) all recall the frightening incident--Rose's sexual assault on her way to Lamley's--and link it to Rose's suicide attempt. "What awful lives children live!" Martin exclaims. Rose agrees with him, adding that "they can't tell anybody." Rose never tells anyone about her sexual assault. Immediately following Rose's remark, the wind picks up and the glass, like the piece of glass Sara sees outside her window, is broken; "There was a gust and the sound of glass crashing" (TY, 123).[30]

Thus, in "1908," the glass recalls Rachel Vinrace's story and reflects the frightening incident, the secret that permanently affects--perhaps even shapes--the construction of Rose: her sexuality, her suicidal desperation, her militant feminism, her self. Two years later, in "1910," the glass reflects another woman, Rose's younger cousin Sara, as an old woman in a stinking, mud-filled cave. And in "1911," Eleanor looks at herself in the glass as if for the first time. In the years before the War, the lives and construction of Sara and Maggie and Rose and Eleanor are invisibly connected with each other through the (looking) glass, the crashing glass.

"Present Day": A new house, a new song . . .

As "Present Day" begins, Peggy's brother North is leaving Eleanor's flat (in "1913," of course, Eleanor moves into a new house, a room of her own) to visit his cousin

Sara. In a passage that recalls Hirst's chalk circles and the reading from Comus that precipitates Rachel's illness and death in The Voyage Out, we are told that Sara lives on "Milton Street, a dusky street, with old houses." On the wall, North observes, "[s]omebody had chalked a circle" (cf. TG, 121). Nevertheless, "people changed after all these years," Sara's cousin thinks. The street, he notes, "had seen better days" (TY, 237). On "Milton Street," something had changed.

The flat Sara lives in, like the house she shares with her sister in "1910," is in a poor district (TY, 131). In The Years, Comstock notes, a number of middle-class women locate their rooms in

> "the new house, the poor house, the house that stands in a narrow street where omnibuses pass and the street hawkers cry their wares," a house around which women can dance and sing "We have done with war! We have done with tyranny!" (TG, 96; qtd. in Comstock, 264)

Mrs. Brown has moved out of her old house and into the new house, the poor house. Women like Eleanor, Maggie, and Sara Pargiter are "outsiders," Ruotolo notes, who try to extend the boundaries of class. Such middle-class ventures into working-class surroundings, Woolf suggests in a speech to a Brighton working-class audience, "are essential to the survival of literature as well as society" (Ruotolo, 176). They are also essential to the survival of Mrs. Brown.

In To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay and her husband are described in musical terms: they are, Mrs. Ramsay herself thinks, although the thought seems to come against her will, "two notes sounding together . . . with dismal flatness" (TL, 62; see Chapter 3, note 17). In The Years, however, the tune has changed. Outside Sara's flat, North hears a new song:

> A voice pealed out across the street, the voice of a woman singing scales.
>
> "What a dirty," he said, as he sat still in the car for a moment--here a woman crossed the street with a jug under her arm--"sordid," he added, "low-down street to live in". . . .
>
> The woman went on singing scales, mounting slowly.
>
> The voice of the singer interrupted. "Ah--h-h, oh-h-h, ah--h-h, oh--h-h," she sang, languidly climbing up and down the scale on the other side of the street.

When the trombone player adds his song, the two "notes" do not sound together with a "dismal flatness." One song does not drown out the other ("What's the good of singing," Sara asks in "1910," "if one hasn't any voice?" [TY, 143]).[31] Nor are the two songs simply complementary. Neither of the two musicians plays accompaniment. Instead, Sara and North stop to listen as the two musicians play their songs:

> She [Sara] broke off; for now a trombone player had struck up in the street below, and as the voice of the woman practising her scales continued, they sounded like two people trying to express completely different views of the world in general at one and the same time. The voice ascended; the trombone wailed. They laughed. (TY, 237-41)

The songs bring laughter, and it is laughter, Woolf notes in "A Mark on the Wall," that will chase the phantom of "the masculine point of view which governs our lives"--the phantom of a masculinist society--"into the dustbin where the phantoms go, . . . leaving us all with an intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom--if freedom still exists" (cf. Ruotolo, 195-201).[32] This laughter and freedom, if they exist, can make room for the singer's voice--and room for Mrs. Brown.

A new vision, a new world for Mrs. Brown . . .

Woolf envisions a "new world" for Mrs. Brown in The Years, a world in which there is room not for an empty house, but for Mrs. Brown. When Eleanor wakes up at Delia's party, she describes a dream she has had of a "new world"--a new "dwelling place" for Mrs. Brown. This new world is not some "other world," some fantasy-world: "'I meant this world!' Eleanor said. 'I meant, happy in this world--happy with living people'" (TY, 295). This new world is connected with Mrs. Brown's new house:

> ". . . It's a nice little house," Kitty was saying. "An old mad woman used to live there. . . ." . . .
> "What you said was true," [North] blurted out, ". . . quite true." It was what she meant that was true, he corrected himself; her feeling, not her words. He felt her feeling now; it was not about him; it was about other people; about another world, a new world. . . . (TY, 322)

In this new world, there is room for a new dwelling place (an old mad woman used to live in the old house) and room for "other people," flesh-and-blood Mrs. Brown.

In this new world, there are no speeches: Nicholas' speech is continually interrupted; when he finally sets his glass down, the glass shatters, recalling the change in human nature that is taking place, the glass that is beginning to reflect Mrs. Brown (TY, 324). There is room, North thinks, for "criticism" and "laughter," room for "people who think differently" (TY, 315). Of course, there is room for both hope and despair: numerous critics have already noted the darker side of the novel. But what is needed, North notes, is the courage to "live differently" and "speak the truth" (TY, 321).

"There must be another life," Eleanor thinks. "not in dreams; but here and now, in this room, with living people" (TY, 325). The vision she has is different from Lily's in To the Lighthouse. Her vision is not a kind of idealist vision, a vision of the "spirit" world only; and she does not look back in time to the death of her mother, Mrs. Pargiter. Instead Eleanor's vision remains in the "here and now" and looks forward to the future. She sees a literal dawn: it is "growing light" outside, she notes. The "endless night" is ending in the "real" world--the world in which a space must be made for Mrs. Brown (TY, 326; 328). Eleanor hears the

unintelligible song of the caretaker's children, the song that recalls the ancient and fertile song of the old woman in Mrs. Dalloway (74) and the new song of the singer and trombonist in The Years:

> Etho passo tanno hai,
> Fai donk to tu do,
> Mai to, kai to, lai to see
> Toh dom to tuh do--
> (TY, 327)

It is a "beautiful" song, although interpreted differently by Maggie and Eleanor. "God save the King"--the song of the patriarchal Empire--is still playing on the gramophone; but Eleanor focuses on the pigeons crooning outside and the young couple getting out of the taxi just down the street (TY, 328-31).

Perhaps Woolf's deletions in the published version of the novel, then, are not simply motivated by "cowardice," as Radin claims; the deletions may be both artistically and, at the same time, politically motivated. In an essay on Turgenev written by Woolf while she was working on The Years, as Radin herself points out, Woolf finds many characteristics in Turgenev that are actually present in The Years (xxi). "Turgenev," Woolf writes,

> never allows himself to become a partisan, a mouthpiece. Irony never deserts him: there is always the other side, the contrast . . . Moreover, though Turgenev could have said with Marianna "I suffer for all the oppressed, the poor, the wretched in Russia," it was for the

> good of the cause, just as it was for the good of his art, not to expatiate, not to explain.

Instead of explaining everything for the reader, instead of "preaching," Turgenev notes that it is better if the reader makes the connections and begins to understand the ideas, the "millions of ideas" that make up the "new world" for Mrs. Brown for her or himself. Woolf quotes Turgenev:

> "Non, quand tu as énoncé le fait, n'insiste pas. Que le lecteur le discute et le comprenne lui-même. Croyez-moi, c'est mieux dans l'intérêt même des idées qui vous sont chères." (E, i, 252)

In The Years, Woolf does not use "the master's tools"; she does not simply rebuild Bennett's house for Mrs. Brown. Unlike The Pargiters, which essentially gives a series of "lessons" about Mrs. Brown, The Years does not give any clear-cut answers about the dismantling of the old house and the construction of the new dwelling place, the new world for Mrs. Brown. Instead, in what is perhaps her most hopeful gesture of the book, Woolf leaves the task with her readers. Thus, in the published version, we are not explicitly told about what Squier calls the feminist society of the future; we are not directly told how to construct a habitable dwelling place for Mrs. Brown. We have to discover the meaning for ourselves. "And now?" Woolf asks at the end of the novel, opening the novel up to her readers, leaving her

readers free to make room for Mrs. Brown. The Years ends on a hopeful note for Mrs. Brown:

> The sun had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace.

NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1.Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," 112.

2.Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Collected Essays Vol. 1, 330, 333-34.

3.See also Leaska, Introduction TP, xxi; Lee, xiv.

4.The feminist society was the London/National Society for Women's Service, a group of women in the professions (Leaska, Introduction TP, xvi).

5.In Three Guineas, Woolf also connects war with a fantasy woman or, as Lee puts it, the position of women in England with the threat of Fascism in Europe (xvi). Many have resisted the argument of Three Guineas: Naremore notes that Marder has called Three Guineas a "neurotic" book (245; Marder, 174); as Lee points out, Bell saw only a tenuous connection between the issues of women's rights and the war against fascism; and for Nicholson, Woolf's "argument was neither sober nor rational" (Bell, ii, 204; Nicholson, xviii; qtd. in Lee, xvi).

6.Qtd. in Radin, 15, n.3; the original source is D. G. Hoffman, "Virginia Woolf's Manuscript Revisions of The Years," MLA 84 (1969): 81.

7.This point was extremely important to Virginia Woolf. Several times, Woolf mentions her wish "to introduce ideas without propaganda, preaching, or philosophy," Jean Guiguet notes. In a footnote, Guiguet cites various passages from AWD to support his claim:

> Cf. AWD p.194 (188): "I'm afraid of the didactic . . .", and p.198 (191) "And there are to be millions of ideas but no preaching . . .", also p.239 (230): "And the burden of something that I won't call propaganda. I have a horror of the Aldous novel: that must be avoided." And p.245 (236): ". . . one can't propagate at the same time as write fiction. And as this fiction is dangerously near propaganda, I must keep my hands clear." (Guiguet, 315)

8.For a more detailed description of the writing and revising of The Years, see, for instance, Guiguet, 302-09, or Radin, Virginia Woolf's The Years: The Evolution of a Novel.

9.L, #3189, #2935, #3075, #2860, #2894, #3084, #2935.

10.Guiguet calls The Years "wearisome and disappointing," a "failure" (311, 315). He seems to attribute this "failure" to a certain lack of masculine vitality and virility: although her "intuitions" seem to have led her to some vague perception of the "exterior" world, she could not convey "its solidity, its hardness"; "she was powerless to penetrate, to master, to organize" (315-17). Nevertheless, despite his insistence on the "failure" of The Years, Guiguet does at least recognize that Virginia Woolf was not simply trying to imitate Galsworthy. According to Guiguet,

> there is no question here of a return to her pre-1919 "realism." Many pages in The Years may perhaps suggest such a hypothesis, although the resemblances are very superficial, but the whole structure of the book refutes it . . . . (312-13)

For various views on this subject, see also Schaefer, 133; Newton, 52; Donahue, 147; Majumdar, 27; and Peter Monroe Jack in Majumdar, 389-90.

11.Compare de Lauretis, AD, 38 (see chapter three, page 5).

12.Is Blackstone resisting the "argument"/the vision of The Years here in the same way that, as Lee notes, Bell and Nicholson resist the argument of Three Guineas?

13.As Squier notes, in The Years, the end of World War I "has a minimal impact on British society; 'The war was over--so somebody told [Crosby] as she took her place in the queue at the grocer's shop'" (160; TY, 233).

14.As I argued in the preceding two chapters, Woolf has already explored the "social structure, the values, standards, conventions" of nineteenth and early twentieth century, white, upper-middle class British society in The Voyage Out and To the Lighthouse. Woolf's feelings about any subject were rarely simple; but whether she would feel a strong sense of remorse for the passing of such values and conventions is certainly debatable.

15.Compare Middleton: "At times parodic of Woolf's own writing, The Years is finally anti-visionary" (158); "characterization is reduced to caricature" (166); in The

Years, a passage that looks like "beautiful writing" is in fact "a parody of that writing style" (167); "[i]t is as if Virginia Woolf were parodying her own fictional endings" (170); "[t]he result is a novel that turns in on itself" (171).

16."The analogy that Robert Scholes proposes between narrative and sexual intercourse again affirms . . . what seems to be the inherent maleness of all narrative movement:

> The archetype of all fiction is the sexual act. . . . [W]hat connects fiction . . . with sex is the fundamental orgastic rhythm of tumescence and detumescence, of tension and resolution, of intensification to the point of climax and consummation. . . . [M]uch of the art consists of delaying climax . . . . When we look at fiction with respect to its form alone, we see a pattern of events designed to move toward climax and resolution, balanced by a counter-pattern of events designed to delay this very climax and resolution."

- De Lauretis, AD, 108, quoting Robert Scholes, Fabulation and Metafiction (Urbanna: University of Illinois Press, 1979), p.26.

17.Others, presumably, do not.

18.In her book-length study, Radin suggests that Leonard Woolf may have played a significant role in the last-minute deletion of the "two enormous chunks." For the first time, Radin notes, Leonard was less than candid about his appraisal of Virginia Woolf's work (115); nevertheless, he did tell her he "thought it a good deal too long" (Downhill, 155). A few pages later, Radin comments:

> Although we cannot know how much influence Leonard Woolf had on the changes his wife made, it is worth noting that he had told her earlier that "Politics ought to be separate from art" [AWD, 246]. According to Leonard's own account, . . . these changes were made after his reading of the proofs. (121)

In the next chapter, Radin speculates that these changes

> may reflect [Leonard's] growing conviction that war against the Nazis was becoming inevitable, and his fear that his wife would be subjected to adverse criticism for belittling patriotism at this time. (139-40)

19.Squier's use of military terms to describe the draft version of The Years recalls Jane Marcus' picture of Woolf as a "guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt" (see Moi, 16). Beverly Ann Schlack uses similar terms in her analysis of what she calls Woolf's "strategy of scorn" in The Years and Three Guineas: scorn, she claims, is a "powerful weapon[]," the "Ultimate Tactic"; its forms range from "murderous verbal invective" to "lethal alliteration"; and its reply to the "malice of events" is "instant aggression, its purpose the annihilation of reality's revolting reptiles" (146-47). If this is in fact what Woolf is doing in The Years, she has not done anything very remarkable; instead of discovering a new framework, she has simply borrowed the old, patriarchal, militaristic one.

20.Zagarell's comments about the questioning of the monolithic self that coincides with the questioning of "the" canon sheds light, perhaps, on the generally negative scholarly reception and the confusion which surrounds The Years:

> Ian Watt identifies post-Cartesian and Lockean philosophy, with their starting point in the individual's experience and in bourgeois society, as the cultural and social matrix for the novel's development; as Watt established it, the rise of the novel keeps pace with the rise of the individual; and the rise, or fall, of individuals--or, as critics of nineteenth-century fiction often put it, the interaction between the individual and society--is what novels are about. In a series of conflations, however, readers and critics have tended not just to equate novels with stories about individuals but also to expect that such stories will always be about growth or decline and to identify all serious literary narrative with the novel. Given such expectations, fictions about modes of life that are collective, continuous, and undramatic . . . . are puzzling; generally, . . . readers either assume that the work has no story, often delegating it to the supposedly inferior category of the sketch, or impose familiar but inappropriate notions of linear plotting on it. (504-05)

21."True to its own conception of a democratic society," Comstock notes, The Years "presents no central character who will tie things together for the reader in a way that would put the reader in the position of marching in step after a leader" (261).

22.In Three Guineas, Woolf uses the image of a cave to describe what happens to successful professional men in a patriarchal society:

> they lose their senses. Sight goes. They have no time to look at pictures. Sound goes. They have no time to listen to music. Speech goes. They have no time for conversation. They lose their sense of proportion--the relations between one thing and another. Humanity goes. . . . What then remains of a human being who has lost sight, and sound, and sense of proportion? Only a cripple in a cave. (TG, 83-84)

In fact, Eleanor uses precisely the same phrase in The Years that Woolf uses in Three Guineas: "When, she wanted to ask [Nicholas], when will this new world come? When shall we be free? When shall we live adventurously, wholly, not like cripples in a cave?" (TY, 227).

In Three Guineas, Woolf connects the "new world" with the entry of women into the professions: although the power of professional women is still very limited, she notes, Mr. Cyril Chaventry "calls upon professional women to use 'their different sense of values' to 'build a new and better world'" (TG, 84-86). The notion that women are the ones to build a "new world" appears earlier in Woolf's writing: see, for instance, her story "A Society," in which a young girl is chosen to be President of the Society of the future ("she burst into tears, poor little girl"), and "The Introduction," in which Lily Everit thinks, "this civilization . . . depends on me" (CSF, 183-85, 255-56). I will return to the "different set of values" and the "new world" in the context of The Years later. In any case, Woolf, we recall, saw The Years and Three Guineas "as one book" and hoped her readers would see the connection between the two; the "theme" of the two works, she said, was the same. As Radin points out, it is only recently that the two works are being read together as Woolf wished (xviii).

23.Quoting the same passage, Comstock comments:

> to say that the novel's dark underside validates its sense of beauty and joy, freedom and hope, is to say that these affirmative emotions are meant to be felt, finally, as the more persuasive. (259)

24.For Wilde, The Years represents a new direction in Woolf's work because the novel "touches earth" or is firmly grounded in the phenomenal world. In The Years, he argues, Woolf links consciousness directly with the "here and now"

(142-43). No longer are objects simply "a means, an avenue to vision." Rather, "[i]f meaning is attainable, and the book suggests it is, it is meaning made, not preexistent; emergent, not fixed; temporal, not spatial." Thus, for instance, the answer to Maggie's question "'Am I that, or am I this' . . . lies in the self's dependence upon and interdependence with the world around it" (146-47).

25."Women have served all these centuries," Woolf writes, "as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (RO, 35). In The Years, Eleanor begins to look, instead, at herself in the looking-glass. She is an older, unmarried woman whom many of us would pass in the street without noticing; Woolf brings Eleanor (along with Rose, Sara, other women, and a few men) to the "center" of her text.

26.Like Eleanor, the white owl has a new home; it has built its nest in the church's new steeple. This new steeple has been built with the help of proceeds from a bazaar, a play put on by women with the help of a bishop (TY, 151, 157). One of these women, Lady St. Austell, has a name curiously like Mary Astell's. Mary Astell, Woolf notes in Three Guineas, proposed to found a college for women "almost 250 years ago." Princess Anne was ready to give her the money for the project, but "the Church" or, more specifically according to Woolf, a bishop, "intervened." "The money went elsewhere; the college was never founded" (30; 172-73, n. 21).

27.In both scenes, a woman "stretches out" in bed to read a book. Eleanor listens to the trees rustling in the garden; Sara imagines herself becoming a tree. Both passages include a reference to glass: Sara watches the man outside pick up a piece of broken glass; Eleanor looks in the glass and adjusts the focus of her glasses (TY, 102-05, 156-63).

28.Grace Radin also suggests a connection between Eleanor and Sara. For Radin, however, the "fact" and "vision" of The Years are more or less embodied in Eleanor and Elvira (or Sara) respectively. Elvira "is the focus of those aspects of the novel that are visionary and poetic," Radin writes, "in contrast with the more matter-of-fact atmosphere of the episodes centered on Eleanor." According to Radin, after the 1891 section, Woolf experiments with "depicting a multilevel reality: using "alternation and contrast, with scenes focusing first on Elvira and then on Eleanor" (Evolution, 38). Radin's division between Eleanor's factual world and Sara's visionary one seems somewhat artificial; it is Sara, for instance, who lives beside the Jew who leaves a line of grease round the

bath (TY, 259); and it is Eleanor who sees the owl and has the final vision.

29.Compare Woolf's comment on Eleanor and Sara in a letter to Stephen Spender:

> Eleanor's experience though limited partly by sex and the cramp of the Victorian upbringing was meant to be all right; sound and rooted; the others were crippled in one way or another--though I meant Maggie and Sara to be outside that particular prison. (L, #3240)

30.Rose also looks in the glass two years later in "1910," in another scene which recalls the Lamley incident. Her discussion with Maggie connects Lamley's with the public house across the street from Maggie's flat. Looking at her own reflection in the looking-glass, Rose asks Maggie:

> "Don't you find it rather unpleasant . . . coming home late at night sometimes with that public house at the corner?"
> "Drunken men, you mean?" said Maggie.
> "Yes," said Rose.

when Sara enters the room, Maggie explains that they were talking about "[d]runken men following one" (TY, 133).

31.Squier comments on this line in "A Track of One's Own." Sara, she notes, is singing a pompous, eighteenth century march until she breaks off:

> While Sara's question may suggest women's almost biological aversion to the violence such a march tune celebrates, abstention rather than protest is its mode. Woolf also revises the original focus on the feminist civilization to come, replacing it with an indictment of the masculine society of the present--for which there seems to be no alternative. (226)

Although it may be true that Woolf no longer **explicitly** focuses on the "feminist society to come" at this point in the text, without presenting an explicit discussion of this future society, Woolf suggests that such a society may be possible in "Present Day." Squier misses this point, however, since she does not connect Sara's statement in "1910" with the later description of the singer and the trombone player in "Present Day." Instead of "telling" us about the feminist society to come as she does in the draft versions, in the published version of <u>The Years</u>, Woolf "shows" us. She gives

us the freedom--and the responsibility--to make the connections for ourselves. Although Squier does not connect the two passages above, she does write about Woolf's strategy of indirection elsewhere; see her description of this strategy in London, 167-68.

32. Laughter plays an important role in The Years and Three Guineas. In both works, it is laughter that brings the possibility of "illegitimate freedom"--freedom, in other words, that is not fathered in line with Whittaker's Table of Precedency (CSF, 114; cf. Chapter 1, "A mark on the wall"): "directly the mulberry tree begins to make you circle," Woolf writes in Three Guineas, "break off. Pelt the tree with laughter" (TG, 92-93).

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